

# Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training M A N U A L



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Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training  
40-hr CEs YACEP  
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# **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training Manual**

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## Recognition of this Training

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## About this Training Manual

This manual is for the use of students in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training, and by graduates of the teacher training. In accepting this manual, you agree that if you do not graduate the training for any reason, you will return this manual to Jennifer Reis Yoga.

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## Scripts in the Training Manual

These scripts are yours to use as students and graduates of this training. You may guide any of the Scripts and Script Segments from this manual, to students and clients in group settings, one-on-one, in-person, online, recorded or not recorded, by any method that you choose. All Scripts are in “quotation marks” and are found primarily in Chapters 3 and 6.

## What You Are Certified For

Graduates are certified to lead experiential yoga nidra classes, workshops and private sessions, using the scripts from this manual, as well as their own scripts based on the structure and methodology of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

## What You Are Not Certified For

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training does not certify you to lead yoga nidra teacher trainings, or to teach others how to lead yoga nidra, as part of any training or yoga teacher training, in any capacity, using the concepts, ideas, manual content, scripts and audio recordings, or any other intellectual property associated with Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, or Jennifer Reis Yoga LLC. All materials associated with this training are under registered copyright.

## The Name: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

You may state in print, or in classes or sessions, that you are “Trained in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra”, or that you are a “Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Graduate” or “Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Guide”. And we encourage you to do this.

For legal reasons, graduates cannot use the name ‘Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra’ to directly describe, or to name, the yoga nidra they are leading. To do this, you must do further training with us, and be licensed to use the name Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. The process of becoming

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licensed requires attending Level II Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Teacher Training, as well as a program of mentoring sessions to become a Senior Teacher. Please let us know if you are interested.

People often ask where the name Divine Sleep® comes from – and some imagine that it is an ancient name for yoga nidra. But it is not! Yoga nidra was never called “divine sleep”. Jennifer coined the name Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra in 2010, to symbolize her realization of what yoga nidra can be.

*NOTE\* You must use the ‘®’ registered trademark symbol wherever the name Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra appears. To get the symbol: copy and paste it from google; type ( R ) in word; or option plus R on Mac’s to get the symbol.*

### Disclaimer

The scripts and meditations contained in this manual are not intended to provide or be a substitute for medical or psychological advice on personal health matters. Should assistance be required, consult a physician, therapist, or other health care professional. Jennifer Reis Yoga LLC does not assume responsibility for use of the scripts and meditations contained in this manual.

### Get Listed!

Graduates can be listed as a Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Guide on JenniferReisYoga.com. This allows people to find you by your name or location to attend your offerings!

Email INFO@JenniferReisYoga.com with ‘GET LISTED’ as the Email Subject. Send us your:

- Name
- Email address you’d like us to post
- Your own personal website (not your studio’s or other websites)
- Location including State
- Date and Location of Graduation from this training.

### Facebook Private Group

For **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Grads** only! This is a great way to stay in touch with each other, ask questions, share stories, post pictures, and receive a wealth of wisdom and knowledge from our grads! Two easy steps:

1. Find ‘**Divine Sleep Yoga Nidra Guides Community**’ on facebook and request to join our group.
2. Facebook message or email info@JenniferReisYoga.com to let us know that you’ve requested to join this group and be sure to let us know the LOCATION and DATE you graduated.

Many blessings on your journey that inspires so many others’ journey

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## Chapter 1. About Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra



### PART 1. What is Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra?

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a form of meditation and transformation whose roots are grounded in the wide and deep field of yogic tradition found in yogic texts, philosophy, and psychology. The framework of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is based on the yogic model of the koshas, which represents each layer or sheath of our being -- physical, energetic, emotional, mental, intuitive, and spiritual self. Divine Sleep® is a process that gives us an experience of knowing and becoming aware of each kosha in order to move consecutively to the next kosha, from gross to subtle, to the deepest place within ourselves, called Brahman, our true Self.

#### **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Not only is Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra relaxing and energizing, but it has the power to transform at deep levels, to become more of who we truly are, thus living from an awareness of one's true Self: with clarity, purpose, and confidence. It is one of the deepest of all meditations, going beyond meditation, as awareness is lead through the koshas to know true Self.

*Nidra* is pronounced as a short sounding "ni" as in lit. *Nidra* means sleep. *Yoga* means 'yoke', referring to union, wholeness, and one-pointed awareness, sometimes referred to as 'yogic sleep' or 'dynamic sleep'. Originally 'yoga nidra' was a term in yogic scriptures referring to a goddess; later referring to 'higher mind states' that occur during meditation. In this modern era of yoga, less than one hundred years ago, teachers guiding lying down meditation began to call it 'yoga nidra'. Now, it means two things: the practice of guided mediation yoga nidra, and the higher mental states one is able to attain within practice.

'Divine Sleep' is an English translation. It was chosen to honor the original Sanskrit, and to help describe what happens in the practice, without calling it 'yoga' or 'meditation' which could conjure up twisting oneself into pretzels, or sitting uncomfortably for long periods of time working very hard to focus. Both could potentially create anxiety for people, which is the exact opposite of the intention of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra!

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is based specifically on a journey through the five koshas which is an ancient map of the human being, and when experienced, can lead to inner freedom. An inviting practice, it can be used by everyone regardless of age, physical ability, religion or belief. All that is required is to lie down and listen. It is a systematic method of complete relaxation and peace, not only for the physical body, but also for the deeper emotional and mental systems, penetrating to the root of stresses, tension, and knots, and allowing the release of subconscious tensions and tendencies that inhibit us from living fully. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra brings us to a place of deep calm, quiet and clarity.

During yoga nidra, although it may appear that one is merely relaxed or taking a nap, consciousness is functioning at a deeper level of awareness. Deep relaxation is going on, and it is precisely because of this deep relaxation that we can be led progressively through each of our koshic layers into higher states of being. Systematically, awareness of one kosha opens the door to the next. The psychic sleep of yoga nidra is a wakeful state of deep introversion and it is here in the mind state of 'yoga nidra' that we visit the threshold state between sleep and wakefulness where interaction with the subconscious and unconscious dimensions occur spontaneously.

Yoga nidra suspends us in the space between wakefulness and sleep, a place we visit naturally before we fall asleep. In this state, we are much more open and receptive on all levels. This is the great secret of yoga nidra, that receptivity is greater when there is complete relaxation. When we are connected to the outer world with our senses, we are in the state of "thinking mind" -- conscious, ego-self, ahamkara, rational, logical, and intellectualizing – state of ahamkara, attachment to the constructions of the ego-self.

There are distinct levels of the mind. When we are in this conscious state, the mind is like a hard substance, and we inadvertently reject suggestion, new information, or impressions that could shift, heal and evolve us. When we are in that place between wakefulness and sleep, the thinking mind, ahamkara, drops into the background. We are receptive and these deeper subconscious layers of the mind do not reject anything. Any suggestion, such as our Sankalpa (positive intention or affirmation) enters the mind as a seed planted in fertile soil that grows and blossoms into deep and lasting constructive change at the root depth of who we are.

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra offers us sacred time inside ourselves for deep renewal that is experienced on all levels. We turn inward, away from outer sensory experiences to feel wholeness again. When our consciousness is separated from external awareness without falling asleep, it becomes a powerful tool that can be applied in many ways. We can use Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra to increase creative spontaneity, strengthen memory, prevent and heal illness and disease, transform our imbalances, as a tool for stress management, learn languages, and get in touch with our true Self, our innate indwelling essence.

We may arise from practice refreshed, alert, with more clarity and self-awareness. We feel connected with the universe and with our Self and we experience wholeness, with greater access to inner healing wisdom. We discover how to rest in the natural flow of life's ups and downs by witnessing sensation, emotion and thought from a place of deep relaxation where we

have less tendency to judge or to react. This practice creates a shift in our consciousness, moving us into a place of peace, trust, confidence, clarity and union. It increases our compassion and self-compassion. We have visited our true Self -- and the discoveries we have felt there flow out into our day and eventually become our way of life. A life lived from our true Self is expansive and permeates the universe.

### **Yoga Nidra Styles**

There are many styles and teachers of 'yoga nidra' and they can vary widely. What they all have in common is that they are guided meditations, usually thought of as lying down in savasana posture. Yoga nidra styles vary widely: some lead through the kosha levels of being, while other styles do not, or it is difficult to recognize which level is being led; some have music, others do not; some have a specific number of outlined stages, others do not. And there are other various differences and similarities between them.

***PLEASE NOTE: In this manual, I can only speak for Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, I am not referring to other styles of yoga nidra. From here on in this manual, when you see the term 'yoga nidra' in the manual I am referring to Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, not the other styles, schools and teachers.***

### **Distinction of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Developed and established by E-RYT 500 yoga teacher and C-IAYT Certified Yoga Therapist Jennifer Reis, this is unique approach to the ancient practice of yoga meditation. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is distinguished from other styles of yoga nidra in these ways:

- Systematically moves through each of the five koshic levels of being within eight stages.
- Incorporates yogic philosophy and knowledge including principles, methods, practices and techniques including breathing, pranayama, meditation, yogic models, asana and more.
- Draws upon models from yogic philosophy utilizing such concepts as the chakra wheels of energy, energy channels and points, energy and sound healing, color, symbol, visualization, connection with nature, archetypes, guides, and addressing specific health imbalances.
- Inspiration from Buddhist philosophy and meditation.
- Incorporates wisdom from Ayurveda such as the five elements, three doshas, prana and prana vayus.
- Invites the practitioner to co-create each meditation, by naturally weaving in their own intentions, symbols, images, sounds, and emotions to have a unique, healing and integrating experience.
- Integration practices before and after Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra may include mudra hand gestures, drawing, body mapping, mandala creation, reflective writing, co-listening, and sharing in order to reflect on the experience, integrate it into one's life, and transition.
- The heart's deepest longing is invited to arise incorporate into the larger meditative journey.
- Is adaptable for everyone.

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is accessible and nourishing, allowing you to experience deeper levels of inner freedom than you ever imagined possible. Transforming stress and anxiety, improving connection to your deepest self, while increasing health and wellness, are characteristic outcomes of a regular practice. There is nothing required of you but to lie down and listen, giving yourself permission to rest, balance and restore.

### **Creation of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Jennifer draws inspiration from years as a professional artist, a lifelong practice of meditation, hatha yoga, teaching yoga, and practicing as a yoga therapist as well as a Licensed Massage Therapist - including Reiki, energy work, massage, Shiatsu, and Ayurvedic bodywork. This has all contributed petals to the flower of her creative vision for Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra which is unique in the world of yoga and meditation.

The creation of this style has many influences including forms of hatha yoga, yoga therapy, yoga philosophy from the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, hatha yoga texts, and others, Buddhist meditation, Five Element and Yin Yang Theories from Traditional Chinese Medicine, and inspiration from the beauty and bounty of nature.

### **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra: Science and Artform**

The 'science' of yoga nidra is the step-by-step systematic process through which one accesses the koshas within the eight stages of this practice, and is explored in depth throughout this manual. The 'art' is that we may draw from the various models from yoga, Buddhism, and other meditation and healing practices, from personal practice and experiences, and one's intuition to create unique yoga nidra experiences for students and clients. Many suggestions on how to guide Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra are offered in this manual. As the teacher you will work with the building blocks of the practice to create what is best suited for your students and clients at the specific time.

Starting with a palette of basic colors the artist mixes them to create more interesting and desirable ranges, tones, values and hues, then finally applies the paint to the canvas with responsiveness, intuition, freedom and flow. In this way, too, we can create Divine Sleep® sessions drawing from the tool-box of yogic philosophy (Yoga Sutras, Upanishads, etc.) yogic psychology (chakras, koshas, nadis, prana, prana vayus and so on), nature, and our life experience.

**The grounding structure of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is the Eight Stages based on the five koshas.** Within the stages, the sky is the limit, and you are encouraged to let your creativity flow. Inspiration can come from almost any source: nature, daydreams, poetry, a vision from our own practice, students' requests, energy, intuitions, dreams, and other's scripts and meditations. Listen to the muse; she is always here, wanting to guide us. Often, all we have to do is get out of our own way and listen. The resources are endless. We do not have to come up with something completely original. Give yourself permission to begin with a script, meditation, poem, or an inspiration from the students, and let it unfold from that starting point rather than beginning from a blank slate.

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a serious practice that is aimed at leading one towards enlightenment or Self-realization. There has been significant research done which proves again and again that yoga nidra is a scientifically sound method to improve health, increase happiness, reduce suffering and alleviate illness.

## A. RELAXATION

*To the degree you have attained peace  
you will find peace in the world wherever you go.*

*---Swami Amar Jyoti*

### **What is Relaxation?**

When asked what they do to relax, many people will say that they play golf, garden, shop, drink alcohol, nap, read, watch a movie or television and so on. These activities may be enjoyable and not demand much from us, but are they designed to relax the nervous system? Are they relaxing us on all levels of being? These activities are merely sensory diversions. True relaxation is a powerful experience that takes us far beyond this. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra offers us complete and total relaxation from head to toe, through all mind states, from grossest to subtlest levels. This is true relaxation.

### **Autonomic Nervous System**

In this era, our nervous systems have sadly lost the ability to switch from 'flight-or-fight' response, to the 'relaxation response'. These are the two modes of function of the autonomic nervous system or ANS. The loss of this ability to switch from one to the other inevitably leads to chronic stress, which then leads to health problems, since our physical body and entire being do not have the time or means required to repair the damage done by chronic stress.

The activities that occur during relaxation response are commonly referred to as 'rest and digest', implying digestion of not only food, but also the integration of experiences, and processing of toxins. This is the only mode or state where the body is actually healing itself. Yoga nidra retrains our nervous system to know how to relax and thus brings us into a state of self-healing. Nothing can heal us from outside of us. Only our being and body can heal itself. All healing is inner healing. Through yoga nidra, we can be brought into the state where our body and being heals itself.

*\*For more information, see Appendix: Robin Sands "Power of the Parasympathetic Nervous System".*

### **How Does Yoga Nidra Differ from Other Forms of Relaxation?**

Firstly, what is essential to the practice of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra? It is necessary to include the Heart's Longing Intention, Body Scan and also movement through the koshas from grossest to subtlest layers of being (this may include from two to five koshas).

Western and Eastern traditions have many relaxation techniques and forms of meditation, such as guided imagery, breath awareness, and mantra meditation. These practices can be used

within many of the Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra as part of the practice. On their own, these techniques are good, worthwhile, and helpful, however none that I know of is designed to move systematically through the koshas, thus all levels of being and mind, as is the intention of this style of yoga nidra.

**Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a system of Eight Stages** that moves consecutively through the five Koshas, or levels of being. Within the stages, we can choose to include almost any relaxation or meditation practice that fits our intention for each practice. This flexibility, openness, and inclusiveness means that we can weave specific elements together to create a practice that is wholly creative, unique and tailored to the practitioners. We can adapt yoga nidra practices for everyone and every condition. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is creative and intuitive, yet because it is organized within the structure of the koshas, it is also a scientifically sound yoga practice.

For example, a Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice for a person or group with the focus of increasing body awareness, which is Earth Element, could be as follows:

1. **Stage 1: Entry Stage**  
Progressive Relaxation: a method of squeezing and releasing body parts (outlined in "Western Relaxation Practices").
2. **Stage 2: Sankalpa-Intention**  
Creation of your Soothing Place (individual and personal safe space that is known or imaginary). Creation of Sankalpa Heart's Longing Intention.
3. **Stage 3: Body Scan**  
Led twice through the entire body.
4. **Stage 4: Energy-Breath Awareness**  
Noticing breath just as it is; awareness meditation.
5. **Stage 5: Sense Perception**  
Feel body Heavy; Feel body Light. Notice feeling of inspiration. Notice calm.
6. **Stage 6: Images, Healing, One Landscape & Journey**  
Using all senses and imagination, journey into the trunk and the roots of a tree.
7. **Stage 7: Repeat Sankalpa-Intention**  
Recall and restate Sankalpa Intention.
8. **Stage 8: Return**  
Return from journey back through each of the five koshas to the physical body.

**Essential to the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Process:**

1. **Koshas:** Systematic step by step process through koshas: physical, energetic, emotional/mental, intuitive, bliss, and true Self. (It does not have to include every level to be Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.)
2. **Awareness:** Development of understanding and experience that everything is happening in our ground of awareness.
3. **Sankalpa:** Setting heart's intention.
4. **Body Scan:** To enter into deeper layers, we begin our journey by observing each part of the body.

### **The Appeal of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

An enjoyable and easy practice, this is more accessible than most forms of yoga since all it requires is to lie down and listen. This makes it appealing to a large percentage of the population. Many who are currently not interested in going to a yoga or meditation class will happily try yoga nidra, especially when they hear that they are not required to do anything and that there is no way to do it wrong.

Not only is yoga nidra appealing to practice, but it has many vital and proven effects for health, healing, and wellness including counteracting stress. It is a highly effective tool for stress management. Stress is the leading cause of illness today and costs billions of dollars and lost hours that could be spent elsewhere. As teachers and guides of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, we have a wonderful opportunity to effect positive change in individual lives, and for our greater society.

### **Practicing Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Can Improve How You Respond To Stress By:**

- Slowing your heart rate
- Lowering blood pressure
- Slowing your breathing rate
- Reducing the need for oxygen
- Increasing blood flow to major muscles
- Reducing muscle tension

### **You May Also Gain These Overall Health And Lifestyle Benefits From Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra:**

- Fewer physical symptoms, such as headaches and back pain
- Fewer emotional responses, such as anger and frustration
- More energy
- Improved concentration
- Greater ability to handle problems
- More efficiency in daily activities

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## **B. PRACTICALITIES: How to Practice**

Yoga nidra is most beneficial as a regular practice done every day or second day. Any time of the day is a good time to practice except right after a meal. Wait one and a half hours or so to respect the digestive process. A practice time of 15-45 minutes is all that is required. Practice in a quiet place where there will be no interruptions -- unplug the phone and turn off cellular phones. A sign on the door -- "In Practice" or "In Silence" -- works well to remind others of our sacred time.

### **Posture: Savasana**

Yoga nidra can be done in Savasana pose on the back, or in side laying position for pregnancy, snoring, or a cough. It can also be practiced seated as for meditation. It is best to practice on the floor on a mat or blanket, rather than on a bed or couch, where the state of sleeping lingers. Make sure the body feels supported, comfortable and warm. Place a cushion under the knees to help the low back, lumbar spine, feel more supported and comfortable. A towel may be folded to 1 or 2" high under the head, rather than a pillow, for proper alignment of the neck, cervical spine. Use an eye pillow if you like and cover up with a blanket as the body drops a few degrees when we relax or lie down.

### **Who Can Practice Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Everyone can practice Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra regardless of age, state of health, culture, heritage or religion. It is devoid of religious content. Modifications are needed for those suffering from psychological conditions, especially if medication is being used. (For these students, initial relaxation, sankalpa intention, body scan, and breath awareness can be used. Beyond these stages, it is best to consult a yoga therapist). You may like to tailor Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra to the group or individual you are working with so that it will be especially meaningful to them (e.g.: stage of life, changing season, particular emotion, element, or chakra).

### **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is foolproof! It cannot be done wrong**

The instructions are simple: with eyes closed, relax the body and listen. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do, except to stay attentive in an easy way without mental struggle. There is no need to worry or become agitated if one does not hear everything that it guided. It is natural to flow in and out of conscious hearing, and in fact, that is the most common experience I have heard from my students over the years.

Sometimes feeling awake and hearing everything, and at other times a person might hear nothing and feel awake, and at other moments be in a place that the consciousness does not remember. Rarely is absolutely everything consciously heard, yet one is absorbing more in this relaxed place of the deeper psyche, than in our normal waking state.

Whatever your experience, and even if you feel like you fall asleep, the practice of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra will still work. There is no way to do this wrong. Simply listen without trying too hard. Even if you think you fell asleep, or if you felt fidgety, or if your mind wandered, the part of you that is always awake was listening.

### **Falling Sleep**

Sleep is not a state of total unconsciousness. Beneath the layers of our conditioned personality called *ahamkara*, we are in fact more open, receptive, and more susceptible to suggestion. Our Self is always awake, always listening and always ready to flow, shift and change. When we are asleep, there remains this receptive state of potentiality. When our conscious self is connected to sensory stimulus, we are less receptive. We may in fact have more potential in the state of deep sleep than in the dreaming state.

It is not wrong to fall asleep in yoga nidra - it may be what the body genuinely needs. Although sleep may happen at times, yoga nidra is a transformational and powerful yoga practice, even when asleep! The ears do not close when sleeping, thus there is a listening deep within the unconscious and subconscious mind. Asleep or awake, the benefits of yoga nidra are always received each practice. And the gifts of yoga nidra carry on far beyond the practice itself. Invite your students to become aware of these gifts in increased vitality and health, calmness, more restful sleep at night, and to notice other positive changes.

Students often feel like they are 'missing out' if they do not hear the whole practice. Most commonly, people do not actually consciously hear everything, because they are flowing through various mind states. There are some things you can do to help students stay more awake and alert:

1. Setting the intention 'I am awake and alert during yoga nidra' is powerful and helpful in doing just that.
2. Practice in seated posture without back support.
3. Keep the eyes open.
4. While lying on back in savasana, keep one elbow bent, resting on the floor with the hand raised in the air.

### **Stillness**

One does not need to stay as still as a statue in this practice. If there is a need to move in some way, usually to get comfortable, then movement is encouraged, and never reprimanded. Teacher's suggestion to move when needed, and try to move slowly with mindful awareness if possible.

### **Practicing Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra: Being Led By a Teacher; and How To Self-Guide**

It is wonderful to listen to a teacher guiding Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra live or on a recording. Once one is familiar with some of the stages, this practice can be 'Self-Guided'. That means not listening to anything, not stating it out loud, but rather mentally guiding yourself through the stages on one's own.

This is challenging to do because the part of you that is relaxing during yoga nidra now has to work at leading! Plus, it is very easy to drift off, lose track of where you are, and to fall asleep. Beginning with one or two stages to start with is recommended (Stage 1. Entry, Stage 2. Heart's Wish, Stage 3. Body Scan are good stages to begin with). Self-guiding is worthwhile to do - it will strengthen the mind's ability to focus (dharana) - as well as develop a sense of self-reliance to guide one's self.

Eventually, Self-Guiding can become effortless, because the neuro-memory knows the pathways of the practice, and we flow through the stages. This is especially true of the Body Scan and also why it is important to choose one particular sequence and stay with it. The nervous system remembers the sequence and when we feel one body part, like a cascade effect, our awareness streams through the other body parts without trying. For example, in my waking life, when I feel stress, or if I am trying to fall asleep, I will bring my awareness to my jaw, inside mouth, throat – the beginnings of a body scan -- and this in turn triggers my nervous system to tap into the flow of the entire body scan which relaxes not only my body, but also the corresponding nerves and places in the cortex of the brain.

### **Experiences During Yoga Nidra**

There are as many experiences in yoga nidra as there are people practicing it. None of them is wrong. All of them are a correct response. Here are some common experiences. Feeling:

- relaxed
- calm
- peaceful
- spacious
- whole
- joy
- falling sleep
- snoring
- coughing
- feeling fidgety
- thinking mind
- levitating
- limbs or body parts rearranged in placement or size
- sensing hot or cold
- small or large
- heavy or light
- flowing sensations
- healing energy
- light
- colors
- every emotion such as bliss, gratitude, happiness, sorrow, grief, tears, sadness

### **Students Potentially Deep Experience**

At the end of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice, we may not know the deep and profound effects this process has had for our students. Sometimes the effects take time to percolate, and students may be in a deep place and not in a frame of mind to speak about it when things are still shifting and integrating.

Be confident that your words, your intention, and offering your gift to them, effects the lives of your students in meaningful ways. You may not hear about each one, but the stories that you do hear are a representation of the whole of the changes you are helping to shape. Know that your work and efforts are making a difference in many individual lives, and that they, in turn, change in positive, healthful ways, and this good energy ripples out to touch everyone that they come into contact with. You are affecting a huge circle.

As Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Guides, we cannot determine or control the experience for the students. To a large degree, as long as we lead thoughtfully and ethically, the experience they have is their own and draws from all of their life experience. The ground of their experience is from a much more vast space than just what we have guided as each student brings their own life to the experience and weaves it into your direction. It is best to acknowledge the variety of their experiences and reactions with acceptance.

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### **C. HEALING: Awareness Heals**

A key part of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is that it has the power to activate healing throughout each level of being- kosha. This practice creates the perfect context for healing because it brings us into the state of 'relaxation response' also known as the parasympathetic nervous system. Our intricate and intelligent system knows exactly how to heal and repair anything that has become unbalanced to become healthy, but it is necessary to go into higher mind states, as in yoga nidra, for this to happen. Relaxation is not a luxury, or something to do to merely feel better, but a necessary part of staying healthy as a human being. Plain and simple, if you do not relax, you do not heal.

All healing is self-healing, as no one from outside can actually heal another. One can, however, help to activate healing forces within their own being and others. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a practice of self-healing that works on physical, energetic, mental-emotional, witness, bliss and true Self, levels of being. Drawing on universal and elemental healing energies, we can create felt experiences of healing within ourselves, and for our students, during every stage of the practice. Golden sunlight, moonlight, white light, or others can scan over the body, fill body parts, organs, whole body to heal and restore. Sounds, symbols, colors, mandalas, flowers, rainbows, and so on can be envisioned around or inside of the body, radiating healing energy that infuses deep inside to generate self-healing.

The power of the mind is such that when you imagine, feel, or think something, it begins to happen on an energetic prana level as well. Vital life force – prana – follows the mind and thoughts like a magnet. Therefore, by simply imagining healing, or any shift is taking place, it will happen by bring energy to that place.

In yoga, we understand that separation is the root of all illness. Feeling separate can happen on any level: from our body, our family, community, our boss, the earth, nature and so on, and is called avidya – not seeing clearly, or ignorance, and is said to be the key cause of suffering. All healing is aimed at bringing our discarded parts back together again. When we are constantly pushing away parts of ourselves, often subconsciously without knowing it, we feel bound and lacking freedom. Yoga nidra heals us by bringing back all parts of ourselves to the table to be felt and acknowledged. We feel unity within and connection to all that is around us by visiting each level of being - kosha.

#### **The Role of the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Guide**

Guiding Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is student based. It is our responsibility to offer what we feel would be most balancing and harmonizing for our student/participants. We begin with where they are now at this moment, and respectfully observe what we can do to lead the student to the door that they are ready to open. It is important to give the student "some of what they want and some of what they need". Value is given to their current condition, and in the role of the guide, we assist them in opening to their next step. This next step is directed from the student.

Our job is to listen, feel, detect, intuit, and sense everything we can about the individual or group in this moment, and intend to guide from our true Self, from our wholeness. In this way,

we can lead yoga nidra drawing from both our conscious and subconscious, and within all levels of our being (koshas).

As leaders, we always keep in mind that the ultimate aim of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is to know, experience, and live from the center of the true Self. We do not want to overwhelm the student with more than they are able to handle at any moment. We can take baby steps toward the ultimate intention. Every moment spent in spiritual awakening is a moment well spent, no matter where a person is in their unfolding, and there is no judgment, or competition to reach an end. This is a very individual journey.

**PART 2. THE TRADITION OF YOGA NIDRA: Eastern Roots And Western Influences**



*Vishnu Temple, India.*

**A. EASTERN WISDOM**

**Eastern Roots of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a form of meditation that also goes beyond meditation because it leads us through the koshas into an experience of our true Self. The roots of yoga nidra are based in yogic philosophy and practices which date back more than 5000 years. The states of mind that happen during yoga nidra are natural, thus ancient, and part of what it is to be human. To access 'yoga nidra' mind states, there have been numerous forms and variations of practice over the centuries that have overlapped and evolved, just as the practice of meditation has had many forms seeking varied states of mind. It was only approximately in the last hundred years that this style of guided meditation has been called 'yoga nidra', which is a reference to the mind states it hopes to awaken.

**Shastras**

In addition to roots in Tantra, the philosophical foundations of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra are based on ancient texts called Shastras: Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (Classical or Raja Yoga), Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads (Jnana and Karma Yoga), and Ayurvedic texts (whose roots are in Samkhya philosophy). What is notable and important is what these ancient texts all have in common: the archetype of the spiritual journey to enlightenment seeking to discover one's true Self. This too is our aim with this practice. Each of these texts aim for the complete solution to this quest in that they are all seeking Self. Many types of yoga today are focused on one or another aspect of the journey, but few are seeking the complete journey to the Self, which are outlined in the Shastras.

### Tantric Tradition

The Buddha, who was a yogi, said there are four ways to meditate: seated, standing, walking, lying down. The traditions that form Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra are ancient. Specifically, the root practices are from Tantric period in India which is dated from the fifth to fifteenth centuries (400-1400 CE). In Tantric practice, the body is seen as a microcosm of the universe. Yoga nidra functions as a bridge for awakening and balancing these universal energies. Practitioners emphasize the body as vehicle for connecting and aligning with the vast energies of the universe. Yoga nidra helps to awaken these universal energies, making the body the sacred temple of the divine.

The tantric practice of *Nyasa*, which means “to place” or ‘to take the mind to that point’ is utilized in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Sanskrit mantras were chanted aloud or silently, and imagined or placed at specific marma (energy) points in the body during seated meditation. In this way the body was transformed into a sacred vehicle by bringing higher awareness and consciousness into these key points. *Nyasa* was a way to instill higher awareness and divine consciousness into the body. We can practice this with simplicity and potency in yoga nidra.

Tantra uses all of the senses to evoke sacred presence. In this practice too, we utilize all of the senses in the Eight Stages. The result of Tantra is the involvement of the entire individual and all the senses in the spiritual transformation process. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra mirrors this ideal goal intention. It is the senses that take in, receive and then perceive the world around us. The senses are highly refined and tuned equipment that perceive the universe inside and outside of our bodies.

However, the senses, when misinterpreted, lead our minds to believe we are separate. I see the lake and it appears to be outside of my body, therefore it is not me. I hear the ticking of the clock and it annoys me. The clock may be ticking, however we are more involved than we realize. It ticks, yes, but it is heard in our ears, with the hairs of our inner ears, so where exactly is the clock ticking? Is it in the clock or in our ears? We actually are the ticking of the clock, it happens inside of us, inside of the perception.

In the west, we acknowledge five senses: hearing, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Other traditions have understood that we have many more. Rudolph Steiner, the father of Anthroposophy, identified twelve senses: Touch, Life, Self-Movement, Balance, Smell, Taste, Sight, Temperature/Warmth, Hearing, Language, Concept, Ego. The 12 senses Steiner spoke about work as a circle, as it were, surrounding the human being, and are all present all of the time.

By using all of the senses in yoga nidra, the entire mind and brain become occupied thus habitual thinking and negative thought patterns are reduced or removed. For example, during the Body Scan, the guide leads the student’s awareness through each part of the body. The student hears the voice of the guide, may repeat the name of the body part internally, may visualize the body part, and also sense the body part proprioceptively, then feels the movement in awareness from one body part to another.

Reducing and removing these thought patterns is key to both the relaxation and healing processes. Both relaxation and stimulation are governed by the autonomic nervous system. 'Fight or flight' response, more often than not, rather than elicited by any real danger, is triggered by habitual thought patterns in the mind which are usually unconscious. We see this when a person has anxiety -- an overall sense of fear and threat even when there is not actually a specific threat. When we involve the mind completely in the senses in the present moment within the body, sympathetic activity is reduced and this sets the stage where relaxation is attainable.

### **Patanjali's Yoga Sutras: Eight Limb Ashtanga Yoga**

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras have been thought to be the most important Shastra for yoga. Most Shastras were based on the perception of Gods and Goddesses. The Sutras are almost completely devoid of the topic, with reference to God perhaps once, and instead focus on the mind, which is similar to Buddhism.

The Sutras are often the preferred yogic text, perhaps because they focus on the mind and not on ritual or devotion, which makes them more accessible to people of all religions and philosophies. The Sutras are dated from approximately somewhere between 400 BCE and 200 CE. It is unknown whether Patanjali was the divine incarnation of the serpent Ananta who supported the entire universe, or if he was a sage, a scribe, a family, or disciples of a particular tradition. Patanjali is also a surname, which is the name of a lineage and school of teachers.

The content of the Sutras was not original but was inherited from the vastness of the Vedas in an oral tradition that is more than 5000 years old. Patanjali chose all of the teachings about the mind and presented them in precise and organized form in four chapters. Yoga is defined in the Sutras as 'the ability to direct the mind without distraction or interruption'.

*Sanskrit* is one of the foundational languages on the planet, similar to Latin, however Sanskrit predates even Latin. Many English words used today have their root in Sanskrit. Sutra became the word 'suture', which is a word that links the teacher, the teaching and the student. Speaking of the Sutras vastness, the main yoga teacher of teachers in the twentieth century, Krishnamacharya, said that there is an ocean between *atha* and *iti*, the first and last syllables of the Sutras.

### Eight Limb Ashtanga Yoga

In Patanjali's Ashtanga yoga system, we find Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is an experience of all eight limbs. According to the Sutras and Classical yoga practice, Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra would be considered to be a complete and whole yoga practice within itself.

The eight limbs are:

- Yama
- Niyama
- Asana
- Pranayama
- Pratyahara
- Dharana
- Dhyana
- Samadhi

#### Yama

Attitudes toward others and our environment – non-violence *Ahimsa*, truthfulness *Satya*, honesty *Asteya*, energy management *Brahmacharya*, non-stealing *Aparigraha*. These are expressed in our *Sankalpa* intentions at the beginning and end of the practice. Our intentions are cultivated and tended in the rich soil of the fertile layers of the mind during the state of yoga nidra. This suggestion sinks much more deeply than when making such vows only on a cognitive level.

#### Niyama

Attitudes towards ourselves -- purity *Saucha*, contentment *Santosha*, practice, self-study *Svadhya*, and devotion *Ishvara pranidhana*. The yoga nidra process can be described as *Niyama* because these traits are essential to the practice. Purification of all layers of our being is the effect and result of regular yoga nidra practice. Contentment is the equanimity that we bring, because of our relaxed state during, to positive and negative things that arise during our practice.

We also develop the skill to maintain genuine equanimity as we grow and experience ourselves as the witness. Practice is our commitment to allow the experience to unfold and expand over time. Self-study is the essence of yoga nidra, what it is all about, as we experience all levels of our being and our True Self. Devotion is the natural state of being as we live more and more from the place of True Self.

Yamas and Niyamas are not harsh rules, but ways to live a life of deeper consciousness. Swami Kripalu said: "Practice the yamas and niyamas ... When you pick one petal from the garland of yamas and niyamas the entire garland will follow."

#### Yama

- Ahimsa- nonviolence
- Satya- truth in communication: speech, writing, gesture and action
- Asteya-non-covetousness: resist the desire for what does not belong to us
- Brahmacharya- moderation in actions
- Aparigraha- non-greedyness: ability to accept only what is given

Niyama:

- Saucha- purity: keeping body and surroundings clean
- Santosha- contentment with what we have and have not
- Tapa- removal of impurities through correct habits
- Svadhyaya- Self study
- Ishvara-pranidhana- reverence to higher intelligence

### **Asana**

Posture of the physical body and the posture we hold in relation to life, is felt most distinctly in the Body Scan stage. 'Stirasukhamasanam' sutra 2.46, is perhaps the most quoted sutra by Western yogis and yoginis, as it is the only one in the whole book that makes reference to the body or asana. It means 'Posture must have the dual qualities of alertness and relaxation' (Desikachar, 180). This describes completely the Body Scan in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

### **Pranayama**

Breathing practices that channel and expand vital life force found in the Breath and Prana Awareness Stage of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

### **Pratyahara**

Drawing the senses inward and away from outside disturbances, a decision to remove life's obstacles and problems at an inner level. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is the scientific process for practicing Pratyahara as we journey through the koshas.

### **Dharana**

'Concentration', which is required, developed and strengthened in our yoga nidra practice. Counting the breath and remaining witness to opposite sensations and emotions are examples of this.

### **Dhyana**

'Meditation'. This is a gift, a fruit of our practice, not a practice itself, and occurs throughout Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice.

### **Samadhi**

'Union'. This is the complete integration of all aspects of our being as wholeness. This is the ultimate and true intention of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra and comes as a fruit of our practice.

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## Important Concepts From The Sutras

### The Kleshas

These are the five causes of suffering. It is rewarding to find out that it has been narrowed down to only five. These five origins of suffering are potent, and deserve our attention:

**Avidya:** Ignorance or ‘not’ understanding, misapprehension, separation; this is the main cause of suffering that causes the other four. Avidya is separation from our body, mind and spiritual nature. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra facilitates connection on all levels and recognition that we are already whole, regardless of how we may feel at any particular moment, or how our senses may create division between us and the world. Yoga nidra washes purification through all levels of our being, so that we may have true clarity of awareness.

**Asmita:** ‘I’ awareness, ego and egoism, imagining that I am the center of the world.

**Raga:** Passion, attachment, and clinging. “I want chocolate ice cream.”

**Dvesha:** Aversion, hate, and pushing away. “I do not want broccoli.”

**Abhinivesha:** Fear, stubbornness, insecurity, anxiety for what is to come; fear of death.

### Samskara

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra allows the bubbling up of samskaras – ‘habits, tendencies, grooves, or biases, in body and mind’. In the relaxed state of yoga nidra, our samskaras bubble up to the surface as the natural consequence of purification. We are able to feel and observe these samskaras in a relaxed state without our habitual reactions. When we turn to face and feel our samskaras, they integrate and dissolve, creating profound changes in deep core layers of our being, which makes real change possible in our inner and outer lives.

### The Five Koshas as a Framework for Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra was designed on the model of the koshas. The koshas offer the perfect framework for the structure and flow of this practice because we move from gross to subtle layers, one naturally inviting the next to unfold, and progressively led to an experience of our true Self. This practice systematically brings us into a visceral experience of each of the Five Koshas, thereby addressing all aspects of our being (physical, energetic, emotional/mental, intuitive, and bliss). It is said that you can only heal what you can feel, and this style of meditation offers the profound opportunity to touch of each of the sacred layers.

## Koshas -- Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra CHART

KOSHA	DESCRIPTION	STAGE
Annamaya kosha	Food, Gross, Physical Body	<b>Stage 1. Entry</b> <b>Stage 2. Sankalpa</b> <b>Stage 3. Body Scan</b> <b>Stage 8. Return</b>
Pranamaya kosha	Subtle, Energy, Breath Body	<b>Stage 4. Breath-Energy Awareness</b> Stage 5. Sense-Emotion Perception Stage 8. Return
Manomaya kosha	Mental/Emotional Body	<b>Stage 5. Sense-Emotion Perception</b> Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey Stage 2. Heart's Intention Stage 8. Return
Vijnanamaya kosha	Witness, Wisdom, Intuitive, Mind/belief Body	<b>Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey</b> <b>Stage 2. Heart's Intention</b> Stage 8. Return
Anandamaya kosha	Bliss Body	<b>Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey</b> <b>Stage 2. Heart's Intention</b> Stage 8. Return
Beyond koshas	Awareness of Emptiness and Awakening to our true Nature, true Self. Sense of I without reference to the personality. Aligning with Brahman, universal soul. Atman, inner Self.	<b>Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey</b> <b>Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention</b>

## Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Stages – Koshas CHART

STAGE	KOSHA	PRACTICE
Stage 1. Entry	<b>Annamaya kosha</b> Food, Gross, Physical Body	Present moment awareness of breath, body, and emotions.
Stage 2. Heart's Intention Sankalpa	<b>Manomaya kosha</b> Mental/Emotional Body	What is my hearts deepest longing?
Stage 3. Body Scan	<b>Annamaya kosha</b>	Awareness of each physical body part.
Stage 4. Breath - Energy Awareness	<b>Pranamaya kosha</b> Subtle, Energy, Breath Body	Awareness of energetic anatomy or breath meditations.
Stage 5. Sense - Emotion Perception	<b>Manomaya kosha</b> Mental/Emotional Body	Awareness of emotions or sense perceptions. Can include opposites of emotion or feeling.
Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey	<b>Vijnanamaya kosha</b> Witness, Wisdom, Intuitive, Mind/belief Body <b>Anandamaya kosha</b> Bliss Body <b>Beyond koshas</b> Awakening to our true Nature, true Self. Aligning with Brahman, Atman, inner Self.	Single images, visualizations or moving journeys. Use all senses to enjoy such as sight, smell, taste, feel, hearing and so on.
Stage 7. Repeat Sankalpa	<b>Manomaya kosha</b> <b>Vijnanamaya kosha</b>	Recall hearts longing and positive statement. Repeat three times.
Stage 8. Return	<b>All Koshas</b>	Lead back from journey and back down through the koshas back to the physical body to arise.

## B. WESTERN INFLUENCES AND RESEARCH ON YOGA NIDRA

Our questioning minds, and those of our students, may want proof of our time spent in practice. When we know why we are doing this practice and how it can benefit us, then the gateways are opened up for a more fully experienced practice to unfold. Western research is a perfect compliment to Eastern practices because it brings to us proof of their results.

### Research

Western science has been remarkable in understanding, explaining and proving the efficacy of ancient yogic practices. Yogis realized centuries ago the potency of prana, the importance of understanding energetic and physical anatomy, and the results and effects of yogic practices. Now Western science has proven many of these same results, and with proof comes acceptance. This helps us to comprehend how powerful a practice Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is. It also helps us to interest others in the practice when we can articulate the documented benefits.

Yoga nidra and other relaxation and meditation practices that are used within the framework of yoga nidra, have well documented health benefits. Research conducted in the last fifty years at recognized universities and medical centers including Stanford University, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Ohio State University, Medical College of Ohio, Banaras University and others, show that regular yoga nidra, meditation, guided imagery, and affirmation, offer viable means of prevention and reversal of numerous ailments and diseases, including cardiovascular and heart disease, chronic stress, pain, and psychological conditions.

PubMed is a free online database through the US Government, which is helpful in gathering specific studies. "PubMed comprises more than 19 million citations for biomedical articles from MEDLINE and life science journals. Citations may include links to full-text articles from PubMed Central or publisher web sites." <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>

## THREE STUDIES ON YOGA NIDRA

### Effects of yoga-nidra on blood glucose level in diabetic patients.

2009, Jan-Mar. Amita S, Prabhakar S, Manoj I, Harminder S, Pavan T.  
Department of Physiology, S. S. Medical College, Rewa 486 001, MP.

#### Abstract

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder, which has become a major health challenge worldwide. South East Asian countries have a highest burden of diabetes. In India the prevalence of diabetes is rising rapidly especially in the urban population because of increasing obesity and reduced physical activity. An objective of this study is to evaluate the effect of Yoga-Nidra on blood glucose level in diabetic patients. This study was conducted on 41, middle aged, type-2 diabetic patients, who were on oral hypoglycaemic. These patients were divided in to two groups: (a) 20 patients on oral hypoglycaemic with yoga-nidra, and (b) 21 were on oral hypoglycaemic alone. Yoga-nidra practiced for 30 minutes daily up to 90 days, parameters were recorded every. 30th day. Results of this study showed that most of the symptoms were subsided ( $P < 0.004$ , significant), and fall of mean blood glucose level was significant after 3-

month of Yoga-nidra. This fall was 21.3 mg/dl,  $P < 0.0007$ , (from 159 +/- 12.27 to 137.7 +/- 23.15,) in fasting and 17.95 mg/dl,  $P = 0.02$ , (from 255.45 +/- 16.85 to 237.5 +/- 30.54) in post prandial glucose level. Results of this study suggest that subjects on Yoga-nidra with drug regimen had better control in their fluctuating blood glucose and symptoms associated with diabetes, compared to those were on oral hypoglycaemics alone.

### **The mental self.**

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### **Abstract**

In meditation, both the quality and the contents of consciousness may be voluntarily changed, making it an obvious target in the quest for the neural correlate of consciousness. Here we present the results of a positron emission tomography study of yoga nidra relaxation meditation when compared with the normal resting conscious state. Meditation is accompanied by a relatively increased perfusion in the sensory imagery system: hippocampus and sensory and higher order association regions, with decreased perfusion in the executive system: dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate gyrus, striatum, thalamus, pons, and cerebellum. To identify regions active in both systems we performed a principal component analysis of the results. This separated the blood flow data into two groups of regions, explaining 25 and 18% of their variance: One group corresponded to the executive system, and the other to the systems supporting sensory imagery. A small group of regions contributed considerably to both networks: medial parietal and medial prefrontal cortices, together with the striatum. The inclusion of the striatum and our subsequent finding of increased striatal dopamine binding to D2 receptors during meditation suggested dopaminergic regulation of this circuit. We then investigated the neural networks supporting episodic retrieval of judgments of individuals with different degrees of self-relevance, in the decreasing order: self, best friend, and the Danish queen. We found that all conditions activated a medial prefrontal - precuneus/posterior cingulate cortex, thalamus, and cerebellum. This activation occurred together with the activation of the left lateral prefrontal/temporal cortex. The latter was dependent on the requirement of retrieval of semantic information, being most pronounced in the "queen" condition. Transcranial magnetic stimulation, targeting precuneus, was then applied to the medial parietal region to transiently disrupt the normal function of the circuitry. We found a decreased efficiency of retrieval of self-judgment compared to the judgment of best friend. This shows that the integrity of the function of precuneus is essential for self-reference, but not for reference to others.

PMID: 16186024 [Pubmed – indexed for MEDLINE]

Ain Res Cogn Brain Res. 2002 Apr;13(2):255-9.

### **Increased dopamine tone during meditation-induced change of consciousness.**

Kjaer TW, Bertelsen C, Piccini P, Brooks D, Alving J, Lou HC.

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Abstract

This is the first in vivo demonstration of an association between endogenous neurotransmitter release and conscious experience. Using 11C-raclopride PET we demonstrated increased endogenous dopamine release in the ventral striatum during Yoga Nidra meditation. Yoga Nidra is characterized by a depressed level of desire for action, associated with decreased blood flow in prefrontal, cerebellar and subcortical regions, structures thought to be organized in open loops subserving executive control. In the striatum, dopamine modulates excitatory glutamatergic synapses of the projections from the frontal cortex to striatal neurons, which in turn project back to the frontal cortex via the pallidum and ventral thalamus. The present study was designed to investigate whether endogenous dopamine release increases during loss of executive control in meditation. Participants underwent two 11C-raclopride PET scans: one while attending to speech with eyes closed, and one during active meditation. The tracer competes with endogenous dopamine for access to dopamine D2 receptors predominantly found in the basal ganglia. During meditation, 11C-raclopride binding in ventral striatum decreased by 7.9%. This corresponds to a 65% increase in endogenous dopamine release. The reduced raclopride binding correlated significantly with a concomitant increase in EEG theta activity, a characteristic feature of meditation. All participants reported a decreased desire for action during meditation, along with heightened sensory imagery. The level of gratification and the depth of relaxation did not differ between the attention and meditation conditions. Here we show increased striatal dopamine release during meditation associated with the experience of reduced readiness for action. It is suggested that being in the conscious state of meditation causes a suppression of cortico-striatal glutamatergic transmission. To our knowledge, this is the first time in vivo evidence has been provided for regulation of conscious states at a synaptic level.

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## Western Relaxation Practices and Theories

The West has offered ways to expand and contemporize the practice of yoga nidra. Western relaxation techniques can be practiced within the Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. The following practices can be used within our Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra process in the Entry Stage 1 as means of relaxing and getting in touch with ourselves.

### Autogenics

Johannes Schultz and Wolfgang Luthe in the 1930's developed Autogenics, a relaxation method that utilizes the interactive relationship between the body and the transformative power of mental suggestion. The student repeats in their mind "My legs are warm and heavy" as they focus on feeling those specific sensations. Sensations include feeling heavy, warm, soft, and so on. These sensations mimic the relaxation response (parasympathetic response in the autonomic nervous system).

Autogenics practice leads to increasing sensitivity in the body's internal feedback cues, and re-educates the body-mind to be in the relaxation response mode- the relaxed, receptive state in which healing occurs. The documented benefits of Autogenic training are numerable and include:

- Complete relaxation of mind and body
- Improved efficiency at work
- Reduced fatigue
- Reduced muscular tension
- Relief from anxiety
- Restful sleep

### Progressive Relaxation

Originally created in 1929 by Edmund Jacobson to overcome medical and psychological conditions, Progressive Relaxation is a practice of contracting then relaxing the whole body, part by part. Counting can also be used to create more refinement in sensation. For example, squeeze hand into a fist progressively tightening as you count from 1 to 5 slowly, increasing the contraction as the number increases; then count backwards from 5 to 1, releasing muscles progressively.

Dr. Jacobson's research discovered that Progressive Relaxation resolved these medical conditions:

**Decreased:**

- Back pain
- Depression and Fatigue
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Muscle spasm
- Irritable bowel
- Muscular tension and neck pain
- Negative emotions
- Phobias
- Racing mind
- Stuttering
- Ulcerative colitis

**Increased:**

- Calmness
- Clarity of thought
- Concentration
- Available energy
- Joyfulness and Peacefulness
- Balance
- Overall health
- Restful sleep
- Self-esteem
- Spontaneity
- Creativity

**Relaxation Response**

This is not a practice, but the effect of relaxation practices. Dr. Herbert Benson, professor at Harvard medical School in the 1970's, discovered the "parasympathetic nervous system mode", and called it the "Relaxation Response", which has become a commonly used phrase. They both refer to a switch from 'flight or fight' mode into a place of relaxation and healing often referred to as 'rest and digest'. These are the effects Benson found when we are in this place of Relaxation Response:

- Decreased heart and respiratory rate
- Deepened breathing
- Significant levels of alpha brain waves
- Profound state of deep rest
- Feelings of satisfaction, balance and peace

**Generalization Effect**

Research has shown that the long-term benefits of these relaxation approaches induce what is called the Generalization Effect. The relaxation experienced during regular practice over several months generalizes to the rest of the day. This is extraordinary! This means that the more we practice Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, the deeper the relaxation response and the more it becomes the ground of who we are in our everyday life.

Robin Sands, Biodynamic Therapist, tells us that the relaxation response visited without force or trying at it too hard for short periods of time every day is what will change our response to stress.

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**PART 3. THE PATH IN DEPTH: Intention and Benefits**

*There is a sphere of experience that is beyond the entire field of matter, the entire field of mind, that is neither this world nor another world not both, neither moon, nor sun. this I call neither arising, nor passing away, nor abiding, neither dying nor rebirth. It is without support, without development, without foundation. This is the unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unconditioned. This is the end of suffering.*

--- Buddha, Udana VIII.1-3

**The Intention of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is not only a yogic practice and path, but offers a lifelong journey of growth and spiritual evolution for both student and teacher. This practice creates and establishes an environment for interactive relationship we can have with the student for health and awakening. All levels of being are accessed going far beyond mere relaxation, into a place where intuitive knowing, deep peace, and joy are awakened, along with insight into the nature of our true Self. Healing and awakening come from the student's own indwelling source and essence that unfolds during this practice. This practice offers an ongoing process for student and teacher where each moment is a moment of evolving awareness of who we are and our complete expression of living life fully.

**The intention of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is connection and awareness with all levels of being to awaken the whole Self.**

**The Results of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

The results of this practice are far reaching, as change occurs on each level of our being. With regular practice, numerous shifts can happen in one's everyday life regarding how one lives, view the world, and oneself:

- Can develop a sense of safety, security, and confidence in physical body
- Improved sense of well-being
- Senses can become refreshed and rejuvenated
- Feeling more emotional freedom, and have a greater ability to witness, rather than react
- Able to handle waves of emotion such as grief, fear, and anxiety
- More easily come to a place of peace in the midst of life's constant change and chaos
- Intellectually, insights arise beyond what is possible to achieve through logic and reason
- Sense of peace and connection with the universe rather than feeling separate and isolated.

**Health Benefits and Effects of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra**

More than ninety percent all illness today is stress related. By inducing the relaxation response, this practice offers a swift entry into deep layers of being, where healing and regeneration occur. The body knows exactly what to do to attain and maintain perfect health, but needs to be in the parasympathetic nervous system state for that to happen. Yoga nidra brings us into this very state of healing. The health benefits of yoga nidra, meditation, and relaxation practices that are within yoga nidra are well documented.

Research conducted at well recognized universities and medical centers including Stanford University, UCLA, Yale, Harvard, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Ohio State University, Medical College of Ohio, Banaras University and others, shows that regular practice of yoga nidra / meditation offers a viable means of prevention and reversal of numerous ailments and illnesses including cardiovascular, stress-related illness, chronic pain, and psychosomatic conditions. Yoga nidra can strengthen the immune system, help regulate high blood pressure, balance flight or fight, assist endocrine system and improve sleep and aid insomnia. Yoga nidra supports all stress related illness which accounts for 99% of illness today.

A few specific studies: Yoga nidra increases heart rate variability HRV, demonstrating a favorable shift in the ANS (J Altern Complement Med. 2012). Yoga nidra showed an anti-inflammatory affect to control pain to manage both chemotherapy and rheumatoid arthritis (Dec 2012. Anc Sci Life). Meditation effects rival antidepressants for depression, anxiety. (Johns Hopkins study). Meditation helps preserve the aging brain (UCLA study). Meditation decreases activity in the default mode network, the brain network responsible for mind-wandering and self-referential thoughts – a.k.a., “monkey mind” (Yale study). Meditation changes the brain: FMRI, EEG proves volume changes in key areas of the brain (2011, Sara Lazar at Harvard). Proven to lower blood pressure and reduce the need for blood pressure medication. Datey et al, (1977); Bali, (1979). Proven to lower cholesterol levels (Cooper, 1979). Strengthens immune system (Dr. L.I. Bhushan, 1998). Yoga nidra assists in disorders such as anxiety, hostility, insomnia, asthma, coronary heart disease, cancer, and hypertension (Bhushan & Sinha, 2000; Shealy, 1998; Erskine & Schonell, 1981; Jansson, 1979; Cooper, 1979; Simonton, 1972; Meares, 1979-1980).

### Benefits

- induces the relaxation response (nervous system goes into Parasympathetic state where regeneration, healing, digestion, and integration occur)
- balances the autonomic nervous system
- increases helper cells that defend against infectious disease
- increases blood flow to the heart
- proven to relieve pain and reduce or eliminate the need for pain medication
- balances and strengthens the endocrine system

### The Effects are powerful

- revitalizes and renews vital energy
- inner peace, balance, and harmony
- complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation
- deep calm, quiet and clarity
- supreme stillness and insight
- retrains nervous system to relax
- live life more fully alive
- deep renewal on all levels
- increase creative spontaneity
- strengthens memory
- awakens our body's own healing mechanisms to improve health and wellness and prevent illness
- balances energy and nervous system
- puts us in touch with our true nature
- connects us with ourselves and the universe
- access inner wisdom

- subdues thinking mind
- reduces or eliminates our habitual thought patterns
- fosters connection with body
- moves us into a place of peace, trust, and confidence
- increases our compassion and self-compassion
- turns off the flight-or-fight mode and turns on the relaxation response mode
- stabilizes mind and emotions
- heart opening, soothing and cultivates self-compassion
- leads one not only towards health and well-being but also towards Self-awakening
- improves natural deep sleep
- can offer significant relief for chronic and unbearable pain
- used to heal specific body parts or illnesses
- complete relaxation of accumulated mental, muscular and emotional tension
- liberation from stress and stress-related disorders
- increases coping ability
- The nervous system, organs and senses rest and rejuvenate
- Restores emotional and mental balance
- Strengthens mind and improves concentration
- Offers profound rest; more than from sleep

### Conditions Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Addresses

- stress (the cause of most illness today)
- insomnia
- heart disease
- high blood pressure
- anxiety
- depression
- aggression
- addiction
- attention deficit/hyperactive disorders (ADD and ADHD)
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Asthma
- eczema
- diabetes
- digestive conditions
- multiple sclerosis
- cancer
- ulcers
- pre and post-surgical conditions
- behavioral challenges with children
- Geriatric psychological challenges
- Brings healing energy to specific body parts/organs
- Endocrine imbalance: PMS, menopause, thyroid disease
- (and many more)

### Divine Sleep® in view of the Health and Healing Process

Illness and imbalance are direct reflections of separation and disconnection from our true Self. Health and wellness are related to our level of connection to our essence. In this way, health and the spiritual journey to one's true Self are one in the same.

Each individual is unique in the way that patterns of balance and imbalance show up. Imbalance can arise at the weakest link in the chain, which may be a particular system in the physical body. Imbalance could also manifest primarily at the energetic level, like in the chakras, or at the mental-emotional level as a negative core belief. From the yogic perspective, the fundamental cause of illness is always separation. This ultimately is a lack of awareness of ourselves as part of the unity and interconnectedness of all things.

### Chronic Stress and Integration

One of the main links between separation and illness is chronic stress. A healthy response to stress is for an organism to provide the energy to meet the demands of the situation. This has

been termed 'flight or fight' response and is triggered not only by actual threat of survival that would require maximization of energy, but also more often by our habitual and unconscious thoughts. Many of our internal demands and stresses are things we feel we need like more money, success at work, to be a model family or citizen, to have a better house, car, or all of the above, which puts constant stress on all aspects of our life. Chronic stress together with the sensory over-stimulation we face every day can create feelings of separation and imbalance in all of the five koshas.

Complete health is the integration of all aspects of being, the five koshas, within an understanding of our spiritual nature. This is our aim in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. This practice gives us an opportunity to increase awareness and witness consciousness of all of our layers, so that we become aware of where balance and imbalance exist in our beings.

### **Pointers to True Self**

Imbalance is an important pointer to finding the balance, which brings us back to our essential nature and wholeness. Illness is a result of imbalance and if we take the time to look, the underlying imbalance becomes apparent. For example, Susan had chronic fatigue that caused her to slow down, thus giving her time to look inside to find the root of her suffering. She realized that she had not given herself the time she needed to really feel or process the emotions around her brother's death. To avoid dealing with emotions, she had kept herself extremely busy with work and helping everyone else with their problems and issues.

Chronic fatigue meant that Susan could not continue on as she had in her 'busy avoidance' and the illness helped, as pointer to her true Self, to recognize this. Once she realized this, Susan began to search. Yoga nidra and the support of a therapist who could help her navigate through some intense, and what she imagined would be, scary territory for her. In therapy, there were some powerful moments, but she felt supported and safe, and learned how to go into her feelings. Rather than continue to push parts of herself away, she began to trust that she could embrace everything that came up within her. Her symptoms lessened and she felt an inner strength and knowledge of herself that she had not felt before.

We do not need to become ill in order to slow down to feel, integrate, and heal. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra offers us a chance to take a break from the busyness of life, which at times can overshadow our underlying feelings, thoughts, emotions and sensations. If there are larger issues or emotions that this practice does not help resolve, then it may be good to seek support from other modalities to work with in conjunction with Divine Sleep®. Simply having one on one interaction can be very powerful. Yoga Therapy, Ayurveda, psychotherapy, and bodywork - like massage or shiatsu -- are a few that are supportive on our journey.

Health and freedom arise naturally from the awareness, acceptance and integration of ourselves on all levels. Perfect health already exists in all of us. To attain this state, what we need is self-awareness and self-knowledge. Healing is the process of remembering our own innate wholeness.



## Chapter 2. The Five Kosha Levels of Being

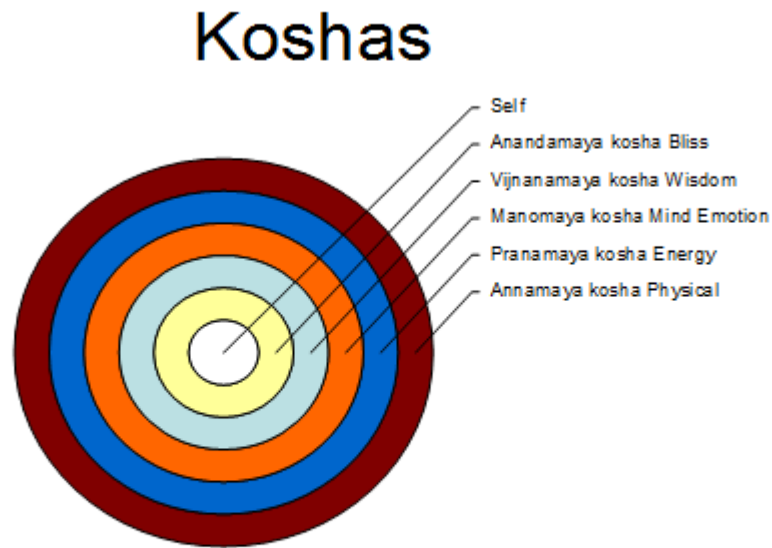


### **The Five Koshas: Pancha Maya Kosha**

*Pancha* means five. *Maya* translates as 'veil, covering, appearance, power of creation, magical power, mystery' and also 'to consist or pervade'. *Kosha* means 'sheath, cover, subtle body, treasure, lexicon' and is derived from the root *kus* which means 'to enfold'. The "maya" of the kosha is experienced both as unreal and as the beautiful manifestation of universal unity. 'Maya kosha' refers to layers of enfolding sheaths that cover our true Self.

The kosha model illustrates a person as multi-dimensional with our source and foundation being the spiritual dimension. We can use this model to address each level of a person individually and as an integrated whole. The multi-dimensional model of the koshas is an ideal framework for the theory and practice of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra which allows us to involve the whole person in the healing and awakening process.

To increase our understanding of the koshas, imagine that our true Self is light, and that our light is covered with five consecutive lampshades of varying color and thickness. Each lampshade is a kosha- physical, energetic, mental/emotional, wisdom and bliss. (The diagram below can represent this analogy). Our light shines through each layer and the colors progressively change as their qualities shift and blend between layers. The layers create individual characteristics. However, the shades also obscure the pure light. On our yogic journey, we are travelling inward through each layer to reach the clear point of our true Self, and to increasingly live our life from that place. It is our Self-covered in five wrappings, the koshas.



The koshas describe us at each of our levels: physical, energetic, psychological, intuitive, and spiritual, and are pointers to our true Self. ‘Pointers to our true Self’ are things that help us to see that there is imbalance and in so doing, bring us back into balance. We come to know our koshas through direct experience in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. With this experience, we begin to understand each layer as a layer, without becoming identified with it. “I am not my body; my body is in me”. “I am not sad, I *feel* sadness”. The intention behind feeling and accessing each Kosha is to develop the skillfulness to be with each Kosha *with* less reaction or identification.

### Origin of the Koshas

The koshas come to us from two Upanishads, which are part of the eighteen principal Upanishads. One is the Paingala Upanishad that is a conversation between the sage Yajnavalkya and his student, who discuss meditation, the koshas, and their effects. The Koshas are also outlined in the Taittiriya Upanishad (750 BCE) which predates the Yoga Sutras (approximately from 250 BCE to 250 CE) by about 1000 years.

The term *Upanishad* means ('upa' near; 'ni' down; 'shad' to sit) sitting down near; this implies the students sitting down near their Guru (teacher) to learn. There is no exact date for the composition of the Upanishads. They continued to be composed over a long period. The core texts, however, were written between 7th -5th centuries BCE, and are the oldest known texts on earth. The Upanishads were originally called ‘Vedanta’, which literally means ‘the conclusion to the Vedas’.

### Dis-identification

The practice of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is designed to familiarize us with each level of being so that we are able to relinquish our identification with them, which is called *dis-identification*. We hold the capacity to dis-identify from each of the movements of our body, senses, emotions, mind, to become free of the stresses and conflicts that keep us from knowing our true Self. It is in knowing our Self that we may live a fully contented life, and know true happiness, and peace because this is independent of all states, levels of being, and koshas.

Dis-identification increases as we move through each stage of the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra process. As we become aware of our physical body in the Body Scan, we become less and less conscious of it. It drops into the background because there is a sense that we have 'tended' to it. This is the natural working of the mind and senses. The mind desensitizes to specific stimulation after a period of time. For instance, when you smell a strong aroma or odor in a room for a few minutes, your awareness of the smell drops away. You may hear a clock ticking, but after a few minutes the sound drops into the background and you do not hear it. The same process is happening as we travel through the Eight Stages, each Kosha drops into the background as we get closer and closer to our true light. Feeling one kosha opens the door to the next.

### Experience of Self

With dis-identification from each level of our being, our attention is free to focus on the experience of our genuine essence as true Self. Our true Self is always in a state of awareness, being and joy are always present: this is our ground. We lose touch with this awareness precisely because we are *distracted* by our koshas through internal and external events and the ever-changing phenomenon of life, so that we rarely are aware of this ground of truth.

During practice, we see and feel things as they are without trying to change them. We are able, because we are so relaxed in this place of non-doing, to feel the right arm *just as it is*. We also feel each of the koshas: we become aware of breath, feelings, emotions, beliefs, joy and so on.

When there is something unpleasant in our lives, our usual reaction is to want to change it. Changing things usually means moving painfully away from what is (*dvesha*), which creates fragmentation and is separation from the Self. It is by *being with* and witnessing, without trying to change anything that powerfully moves us beyond. This is one of the secrets of yoga nidra. By learning to be with, and to acknowledge and accept what is, we dis-identify with issues and events. The thorn in the eye becomes more like a speck of dust, which no longer causes pain and suffering.

The reverse is also true: the more we push something away or dwell on it with emotions and thinking mind, the bigger the thorn becomes. Emotions and thoughts that are pushed aside can be thought of as a beach ball. When you push that beach ball underwater, it will come up again, perhaps in a different place, but always with stronger force. Things pushed underneath live in the unconscious, and there they are fertilized, tilled, multiply and get stronger. It is much better to *simply feel*, without reacting, however intense it may seem at the time. In this way emotions and thoughts are actually processed rather than festering within us.

It is precisely the practice of yoga nidra that is so calming, soothing and holds a space where we can more easily be with what is, without reaction. Because of the safe environment, and because our Self is always wanting to integrate into Wholeness, many emotions, thoughts, understandings and images arise during the process of this meditation. It is in this thorough integration that we come to know our wholeness.



## ANNAMAYA KOSHA: Physical or Gross Body

- Anatomy, Physiology, and Systems of the body
- Five Elements: Specifically Earth Element
- Seasons
- Three Doshas (defect/ imbalance/ constitution)
- Nadi energy channels and Marma points energy points
- Muladhara Root first chakra
- Obstacles: attachment, aversion, desire, doubt, lethargy
- Practices: Asana, alignment, posture, dance, movement, massage, bodywork, Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra: Stage 1. Entry, Stage 3. Body Scan

*Anna* means ‘food’, and refers here to the body that grows by eating food, like in growing children. This is the densest level of being, and includes from the Western perspective the anatomical structures and physiological processes. In Western concepts of science and medicine, the Annamaya kosha represents the entirety of a person. We can see that the yogic tradition goes much further in the understanding of what the whole person is with its four more levels and true Self.

From yoga, we learn that the physical body sheath also includes concepts of the five elements and in Ayurveda we find the three doshas. The elements are the building blocks of the doshas, which describe the physical “type” or constitution of a person.

## The Five Elements - Pancha Maha Bhuta: the Five Great Material States

Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether: the Five Elements are the building blocks of our body, energy, constitution, and the universe. Each of the five elements corresponds with a kosha. The elements flow in a consecutive order from most dense to most ephemeral. When very saturated, an element naturally transforms into the next element. For example, when we feel very heavy and dense, tuning into Earth Element in Divine Sleep® practice, it subsequently opens us to feel the flow of breath and perhaps even energy impulses. This is the current of Water Element.

When our internal elements are balanced, we are in greater harmony with the seasons and natural world. When our elements are out of balance, we feel our equilibrium disrupted, life may be a struggle, and our poise lacking. Balancing our elements allows our natural constitutions to come into harmony so that we may enjoy increased health and inner peace.

## Acclimatizing to the Season

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), our bodies are constantly adapting to harmonize with the current season and the elements. If you consider just how large, with what force and sheer dimension each 'season' has compared with the human dimension, it is understandable that it is we who are always acclimatizing to this larger energy. It can be helpful to guide yoga nidra to support this harmonizing with the current season or the one that we are transitioning into. Each season has its' own qualities and attributes. Ayurveda and TCM outline these qualities which are like archetypal models that everything can be categorized into:

**Winter:** Water element, purification, elimination, drive, impetus, bones, emotion of fear, north, kidney, bladder, hearing.

**Spring:** Wood element (TCM has this additional element), stores and distributes in the body, plan, organize, decide, gall bladder, liver, eyes, tears, soft tissue: muscles, tendons, ligaments, emotion of anger, forest, tree, dreams, wind, east.

**Summer:** Fire element, integration, absorption, protect, circulate, lymphatic system, small intestine, heart, triple burner, pericardium, speech, tongue, joy, sad, laugh, hear, south, fire dreams.

Summer is also Earth Element: reproduce, digestive fluid, reflect, memory, stomach spleen, taste, touch, mouth, connective tissues, sweet, singing, music, worry, sympathy, compassion, center direction, damp, humid.

**Autumn:** Air, Ether and Metal element (TCM has this additional element), exchange with environment, incoming outgoing, concentration, analytical thinking, smell, nose, nostrils, skin, body hair, grief, weep, whine, cough, denial, flying dreams, spicy flavor, dryness, West direction, large intestine, lung.

## Ayurveda

Ayurveda is the sister science to yoga and means the 'science of life'. It is based in one of the most ancient philosophies called Samkhya, dated before 2nd century BCE. Samkhya ideas have been around at least since 6th century BCE as Gautama the Buddha was familiar with these ideas. One of the main teachings of Ayurveda are the Five Elements, and from the elements the model of the Doshas or constitutions arose. In Divine Sleep Yoga Nidra we may utilize skills from Ayurveda to aid in creating practices that serve to re-balance us and help us live long, healthy lives.

### **Doshas: Vata, Pitta, Kapha**

The Doshas are three primary constitutions that are found in each person to varying degrees. Each dosha represents two elements. Our personal dosha points out where we tend to fall out of balance. When we are aware of our doshas and can identify which elements or doshas are out of balance in ourselves and others, then we can *begin to increase the element* that will bring the person back into balance through Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Most people are generally a combination of two doshas, although some are strongly one, and still fewer are all three called 'tridoshic'.

Vata – Air and Ether Elements

Pitta – Fire and Water Elements

Kapha – Earth and Water Elements

### **Harmonizing with Ayurveda**

It is helpful to do Ayurvedic questionnaires to understand our doshas and where we may be out of balance today. The questionnaire that follows is to help connect with what is out of balance currently called Vikruti.

### **Ayurvedic Vikruti Questionnaire**

To find out your current imbalance check each quality that applies to you today:

I have been feeling irritable or impatient

I have a strong and consistent appetite

I often feel overheated

I have acid indigestion or heartburn

I tend to be critical or intolerant of errors

**Pitta Fire and Water total**

I have been feeling worried or anxious

I have difficulty falling or staying asleep

I feel restless if I'm not constantly on the move

My digestion is irregular with frequent gas or bloating

I get constipated

**Vata Air and Ether total**

I have a slow digestion and feel heavy after eating

I easily accumulate clutter in my life

I am currently overweight and have difficulty losing extra pounds

I commonly experience sinus congestion or phlegm in my respiratory tract

I like to maintain a routine and resist changing my pace

**Kapha Earth and Water total**

If an individual's pitta is out of balance, then it may be helpful to add more Water and Space/ Ether elements. When kapha is out of balance, add more Fire and Space/ Ether elements. For vata imbalances (the most common imbalance today regardless of dosha) add more Earth and Water elements. These are general guidelines as each person and situation is unique. The subject of Ayurveda is as vast as yoga itself and further study greatly increases one's understanding of the body, balance and health, the elements, and their application in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

More information available on Ayurveda Chapter 7: Resources, References, and Bibliography.

Following is a questionnaire from Banyan Botanicals that outlines your constitution called Prakriti, or nature. This is the constitution that was created at the moment of conception and is with you this lifetime. [www.banyanbotanicals.com](http://www.banyanbotanicals.com)

**Prakriti (Lifelong Characteristics, Qualities and Tendencies)**

Quality	Doesn't apply	Somewhat applies	Applies
1. My lifelong tendency has been to be thin and lanky	0	1	2
2. I find having a routine in life to be challenging	0	1	2
3. My skin tends to be rough and dry, even if I don't live in a dry, arid climate (but especially if I do)	0	1	2
4. My joints are fairly prominent	0	1	2
5. My teeth are protruded and/or crooked	0	1	2
6. My hair is kinky, curly and tends to be dry or frizzy	0	1	2
7. It is usually easy for me to lose weight and I usually have difficulty gaining weight	0	1	2
8. Usually in my life I enjoy hot weather	0	1	2
9. I tend to dislike wind	0	1	2
10. I tend to dislike dry	0	1	2
11. I have a medium build with medium bone structure	0	1	2
12. I enjoy competitive activities and enjoy physical or intellectual challenges	0	1	2
13. My teeth are medium-sized and/or a little yellow (stained doesn't count)	0	1	2
14. I have fair skin which easily sunburns	0	1	2
15. I have a lot of moles or freckles	0	1	2
16. I am or am becoming bald, I have grayed early, or I have thin or fine hair	0	1	2
17. Chili peppers, tomatoes and spicy food in general tends to cause me digestive distress, including heartburn or stomachache or loose stools, (even if I really enjoy the taste and am attracted to these things)	0	1	2
18. I prefer a cool climate to a warm one	0	1	2
19. I dislike heat, especially humid heat and feel easily fatigued by it	0	1	2
20. I have a sharp, intelligent, aggressive mind	0	1	2
21. I have a sturdy constitution with a large bone structure	0	1	2
22. I enjoy having a routine in life	0	1	2
23. My teeth are large, straight and white	0	1	2
24. My hair is a little wavy, thick and lustrous	0	1	2
25. My eyes are large and luxurious	0	1	2
26. I enjoy sleep and generally sleep deeply	0	1	2
27. I gain weight easily and have difficulty losing weight	0	1	2
28. My appetite is slow and steady	0	1	2
29. I tolerate most climates well but usually in my life I have preferred warm weather	0	1	2
30. My energy and stamina are consistent. When I have a lot to do I do it at a pace that I can maintain for a long time	0	1	2

1-10 are Vata Air and Ether.

11-20 are Pitta Fire and Water.

21-30 are Kapha Earth and Water.

*Most people have a Dual Dosha constitution (two highest counts). If all three of your scores are 30% or higher, you have a Tri Dosha constitution (rare).*



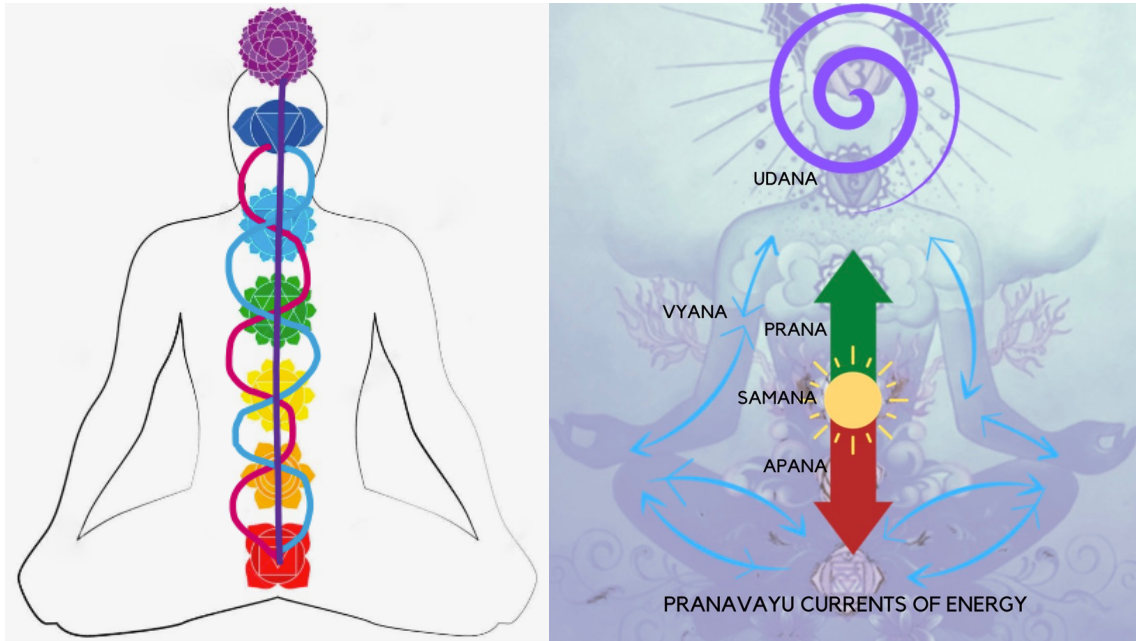
## PRANAMAYA KOSHA Energy Breath Body

- Prana – Vital Life Force
- Five Pranavayus: Energy Currents
- Nadi channels and Marma points
- Chakra Wheels of Energy
- Practices: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra-- Stage 4 Energy and Breath Awareness, Mudras, Pranayama, Chakra work, Acupuncture, Marma energy work, Shiatsu

*Prana* means *vital life force or energy*. It is the vital force that produces the subtle vibrations related to breath. Prana is the driving force behind the senses and the operation of the physical body. It allows the invisible indweller, our true Self to animate our physical body. The body is an interconnected network of energy and intelligence. To sustain health, we need a balanced flow of prana. In the yogic tradition, the energy body includes pranavayu the five energy currents, *nadi* energy channels, *marma* energy points, and *chakra* energy wheels or centers.

The breath is the bridge between the physical and the energy bodies. Observing breathing patterns allows us to see into the energy body. Physical sensations are observations of prana and we can look at them as messengers of what is underlying. Practicing specific pranayama breathing patterns both physically or psychically (a practice we do within Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra) serves to re-train, regulate, and direct the breath, thereby increasing one's energetic capacity, health and wellbeing.

Prana and mind are closely linked and pull each other like magnets. Where prana goes, the mind follows and vice versa. When prana is strong in part of the body, such as an itch on the body, or a sore foot, the attention is drawn there. If the mind is drawn to something, prana follows it, for example when you see someone eating an ice cream cone, you may get hungry for one. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra serves to strengthen the mind to overcome the restlessness of prana so we can direct this force consciously.



Nadis: Ida, Pingala, Shushumna with Chakra Wheels

Five Pranavayu Energy Currents

## Nadi Energy Channels

Energy channels, called nadi in Sanskrit, translate as 'little rivers'. The hatha yogis counted 72,000 nadis in and around the body (Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Goraksha Samhita). Energy channels can become blocked or stuck which impedes the flow of energy. We begin life with energy flowing freely through our nadis. The process of life with its emotion, toxins, abuse, negative beliefs, that is said leads to illness and injury that blocks channels. All yoga is designed specifically to free up the energy channels to feel more alive, flowing, healthy and free.

Ida (left nostril, feminine), Pingala (right nostril, masculine) and Sushumna (central) are three main clusters of nadis that flow from the base of the body to the head. Where these three nadis intersect is said to be a Chakra wheel of energy.

## Five Pranavayus: Energy Currents

*Prana* means vital life force, and *vayu* means wind. Our body has five pranavayus which have their own form, function and area of the body. Each vayu nourishes specific systems of the body and there is a direct relationship between the vayus and physical illness. The first step in healing is the ability to feel and sense each vayu. Balanced vayus will feel like full, smooth, free flowing energy.

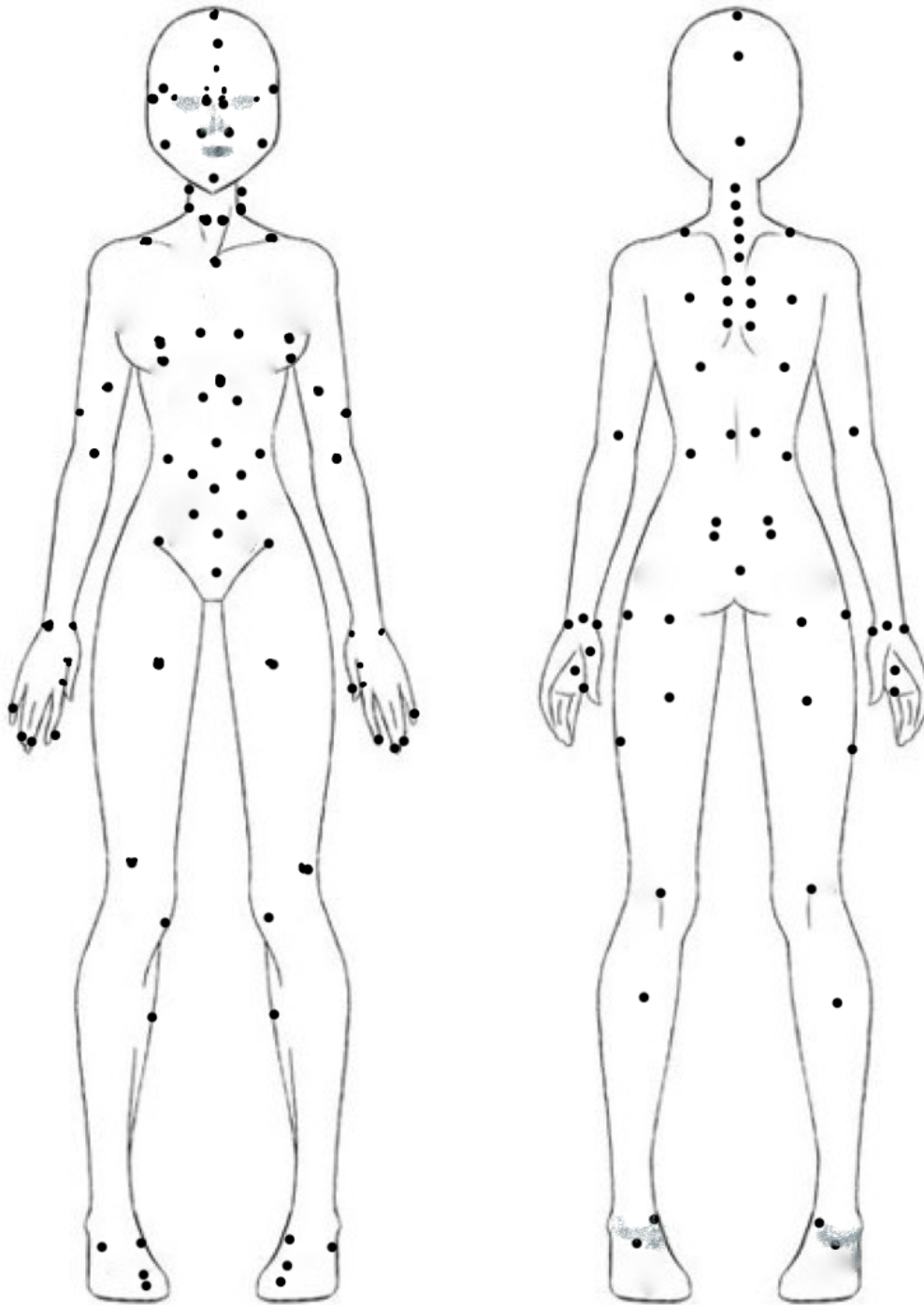
Pranavayu Energy Current Chart		
Vayu	Location and Direction	Function
<b>Apana Vayu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downward flowing</li> <li>Exhalation</li> <li>From navel to perineum</li> </ul>	Eliminatory, urinary, and reproductive systems. Earth & Water Elements. 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> Chakras.
<b>Prana Vayu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upward flowing</li> <li>Inhalation</li> <li>From navel to chest</li> </ul>	Cardiovascular, respiratory, and immune systems. Vitality, heart and lung health. Air Element. 4 <sup>th</sup> Chakra.
<b>Samana Vayu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accordion-like flow</li> <li>Inhale outward - Exhale into Solar center</li> <li>Navel to Solar plexus</li> </ul>	Digestive system. Balances Prana and Apana Vayus. Fire Element. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Chakra.
<b>Udana Vayu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upward from collar bones and circulating through head</li> <li>Inhale upward – Exhale through head and senses</li> </ul>	Endocrine, central nervous system, and immune systems. Brain and sense organs. Ether and beyond Elements. 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Chakras
<b>Vyana Vayu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding globally</li> <li>Inhale to navel – Exhale through limbs</li> <li>Entire body</li> </ul>	Circulatory, lymphatic, and peripheral nervous system. Ether & Water Elements. 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> Chakras.

## Marma Points on Nadi Channels

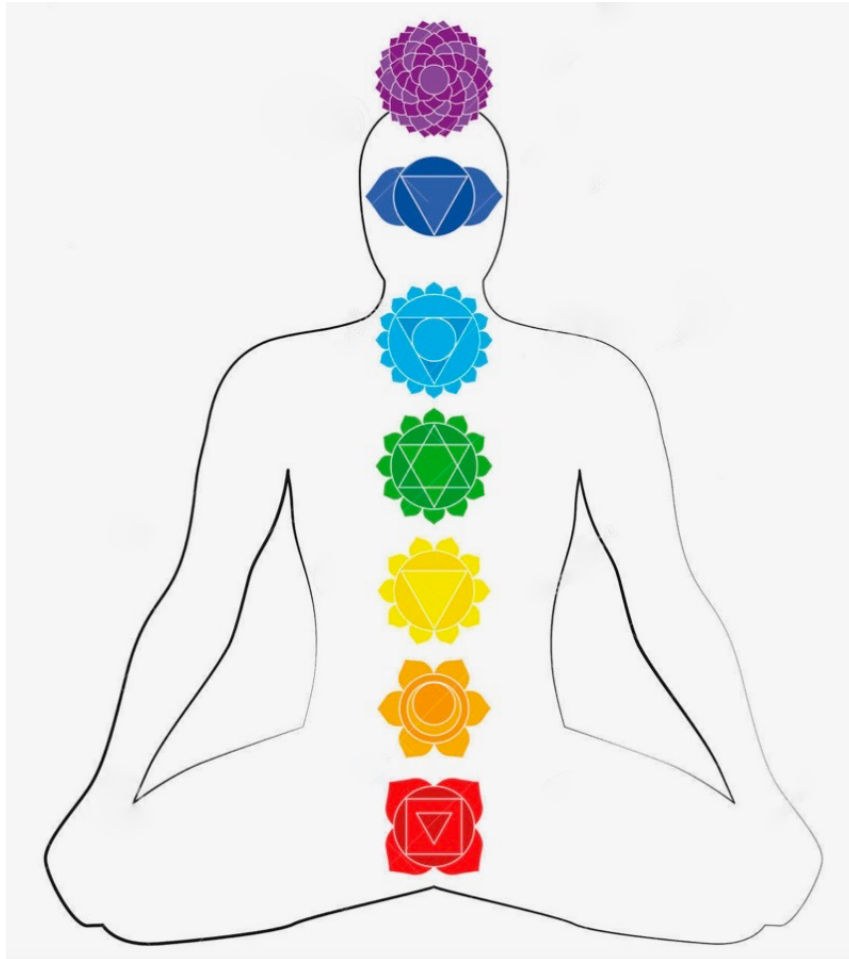
*Marmas* are junctions or meeting points of the five organic principles: ligaments, vessels, muscles, bones and joints, with the four types of vessels being the nerves, lymph, arteries and veins. By making a gentle circular movement with fingers on the marma, toxins are released and electrochemical balance is reestablished. Many of the marma or pressure points in ayurvedic bodywork correspond to those used in Japanese/Chinese Shiatsu and Western Reflexology.

Marmas can be accessed in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice through awareness by simply guiding attention on the points to feel and sense them. And also by utilizing them as points for Nyasa practice which invests them with symbols like AUM, a flower or mandala, or other personal symbols. These symbols can also be guided to pulse with energy or light, or emit sounds like AUM, or bija seed sounds of the chakras and elements.

## Marma Energy Points Map



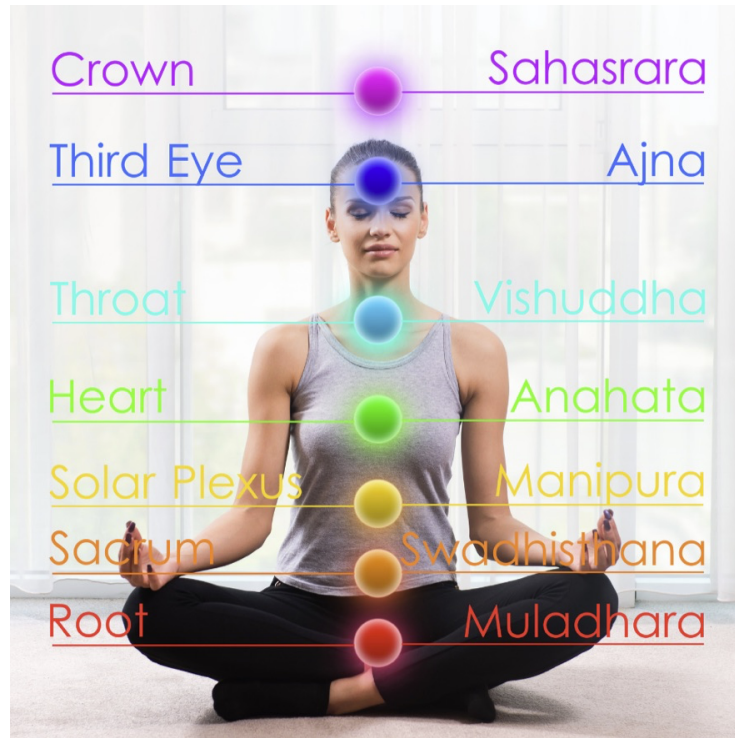
## Chakra Wheels of Energy



*Chakra* is pronounced with a hard “CH” sound; not “SH” as many people mistakenly say ‘shakra’. Chakras are energy wheels or vortexes located at key centers in the energy body that correspond with physical parts of the body such as the nerve plexus’ and glands in the endocrine system. The first five chakras correspond to the five elements. Some yogic texts (Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, Hatha Yoga and Tantric texts) refer to seven chakras, others nine, still others count twenty-seven and more also with minor chakras, but the most common system is seven. The chakras are three-dimensional and located near the spine from base of the body to crown.

Chakras are housed in the Pranamaya Kosha, however they are multi-dimensional and encompass a person at every level. Chakras receive, store and distribute subtle energy throughout the body. Each chakra resonates at a different frequency, beginning at the Root Chakra with a low frequency symbolic of survival needs, and evolves into higher frequencies representing spiritual insight and union at the Crown Chakra. There is a main theme to each chakra:

Root	Survival
Navel	Fluidity Intimacy
Solar	Life Purpose
Heart	Witnessing, Love and Compassion
Throat	Spiritual Purification
3 <sup>rd</sup> Eye	Relationship with Spirit
Crown	Divine Union



It is important to keep in mind when exploring the chakras that they do not have to show up in a particular way, and may not in fact be similar what a chakra diagram may show. The original texts revealed the colors of the chakras as very different from the rainbow colors that are commonly depicted today and have been used for only about one hundred years.

Yoga is a subjective experience and there is as much variety in experiences as there are people who have practice over the years. The information that has been passed down to us from ancient times was from individual experience, and thus varies greatly from one text or tradition to another. That does not take away any of the power or depth of our current understanding of the chakras, but may encourage us to be open in our approach and to what we discover.



## MANOMAYA KOSHA Mental-Emotional Body

- Thinking mind
- Emotions
- Core Beliefs
- 3 Gunas: Raja, Tama, Sattwa
- Fire Element
- Manipura Solar Plexus Chakra
- Practices: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra—Stage 5 Sensory Perception, Mantra, develop loving mental/emotional qualities, psychotherapy, study of yogic Scriptures, Self-study

*Mana* means *mind* and at this level we process thoughts and emotions. After taking care of the physical body and training the energy flow of prana, then we come to witness and train mind and emotions. ‘Mind’ refers to ‘thinking mind’, which is the personality with its likes, dislikes, and habit patterns. Our basic emotions of fight-or-flight response, fear, and anger are found at this level of being.

### The mind and brain during Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

*You can plumb the depths of a well, but the depths of the mind are unfathomable.*  
---Indian proverb

#### Conscious Mind is the Gatekeeper

The conscious mind is the gatekeeper to our deeper subconscious and unconscious levels of being. When we involve all of our channels of communication, senses, and sense organs in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, we keep the conscious gatekeeper busy to allow transformation to reach these deeper levels of the mind. From the yoga perspective, illness occurs first in the form of belief patterns or core beliefs. These negative belief patterns always involve ‘separation’. Yoga tells us there is no separation. Any separation is separation: it could be separation between mind and body, the individual and family, society and universe as a whole. By engaging the mind, Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra reaches these deeper levels of separation

and establishes a knowing of wholeness. According to yoga, realizing wholeness and unity is what heals every illness.

## Sankalpa Intention: The Bridge

The Sankalpa Intention stage of Divine Sleep® is very powerful. It is a way for the conscious mind to speak directly to the sub and unconscious mind thereby creating a bridge of connection and the possibility of profound transformation. It is here that we can change our negative core beliefs that are rooted in the subtle levels of being and mind, into knowing and experiencing that we are in fact powerful; that it is okay to relax, and to flow with life; that life is abundant; that we are worthy and deserve love; that it is okay to fail, and to succeed; and that we trust ourselves. This effects deep seated changes that are reflected in the underlying ground of the quality of our life which becomes less rigid and opens to an expansion, joy, and trust that we may have never imagined possible.

## Autonomic Nervous System: Flight or Fight

It is usually *habitual thought patterns* in the mind that trigger us into a state of flight or fight: rarely are we *actually* fighting off a tiger! We are more often than not fighting stresses that are happening in the battleground of the mind. During Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, our mind being completely occupied, these habitual thought patterns are reduced or eliminated. (*For more information read Robin Sands article in Appendix.*)

### Qualities of Conscious Mind (Jagrat)

- Abstract
- Time bound
- Short term memory
- Open
- Limited processing: 2000 bits of information/ second
- Can handle only a few tasks at a time

### Qualities of Unconscious Mind (Shushupti)

- Concrete/literal
- Timeless
- Long-term memory
- Conditioned
- Expanded ability to process: 4 billion bits of information/ second
- Handles thousands of tasks simultaneously

## Levels of the Mind

### A. Subconscious mind

- Conditioning and Trauma
- Individual, familial, ancestral
- Affects how we behave
- Passed on generation to generation.

### B. Unconscious mind

- Sum total conditioning of human species, from the birth of the universe to present; includes all human beings
- Works in present tense
- In the language of symbolic representation

### C. Witness Consciousness

- Uses conscious mind to observe subconscious and unconscious
- Fundamental tool for self-development and understanding in Yoga
- Observing objectively -- not identifying with or judging
- Higher mind

## Mind According to Yoga

### Shtula Sharira = Gross Physical Body

- Jagrat
- Conscious Mind
- Wakeful Awareness

### Sukshma Sharira = Mind Subtle Body

- Swapna
- Subconscious Mind
- Dreaming Awareness

### Karana Sharira = Spiritual/ Causal

- Shushupti
- Unconscious Mind
- Deep Sleep Meditative

## Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra and the Mind Chart

Divine Sleep® STAGES	KOSHA	SHARIRA (body, mind, spirit)	PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION	PHYSIOLOGICAL STATE
1. Entry	<b>Annamayakosha</b> Physical Body	Shtula sharira Body/Gross	Jagrat Conscious Mind Beta (13-20 cycles/second)	Awake & aware
2. Heart's Intention	<b>Annamayakosha, all Koshas</b> and beyond	Shtula sharira Body/Gross	Jagrat Conscious Mind Beta	Awake & aware
3. Body Scan	<b>Annamayakosha</b> , entry into <b>Pranamayakosha</b> Energy Breath Body	Shtula sharira And entry into Sukshma	Jagrat Conscious Mind Beta	Awake & aware
4. Breath - Energy Awareness	<b>Pranamayakosha</b> Energy Breath	Shtula sharira And entry into Sukshma	Jagrat Conscious Mind Alpha (8-12 cps)	Awake & aware
5. Sense – Emotion Perception	<b>Manomayakosha</b> Mental/Emotional Body	Sukshma sharira Mind/Subtle Astral	Swapna Subconscious mind Theta (4-7 cps)	Dreaming awareness - Inspired Thought
6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey	<b>Vijnanamayakosha</b> Wisdom/Intuitive Body and <b>Anandamayakosha</b> Bliss Body	Karana Sharira Spirit/Causal	Swapna and Shushupti Unconscious mind Delta (0-4 cps)	Deep sleep - Meditative awareness
7. Repeat Heart's Intention	<b>Anandamayakosha, all Koshas</b> and beyond	Karana Sharira Spirit/Causal	Swapna and Shushupti Unconscious mind Delta (0-4 cps)	Deep sleep Meditative awareness
8. Return	<b>Manomayakosha</b> <b>Pranamayakosha</b> <b>Annamayakosha</b>	Sukshma Shtula	Shushupti Swapna Jagrat	
	<b>Beyond Koshas: Brahman/ Unity</b>	Beyond Consciousness	Turiya Super-Consciousness Unity Consciousness (Can happen at any stage of Yoga Nidra)	Pure Consciousness - Absolute

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**Emotion**
**The Guesthouse**

*This being human is a guest house.  
 Every morning a new arrival.  
 A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
 some momentary awareness comes  
 as an unexpected visitor.  
 Welcome and entertain them all!  
 Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
 who violently sweep your house  
 empty of its furniture,  
 still, treat each guest honourably.  
 He may be clearing you out  
 for some new delight.  
 The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
 meet them at the door laughing,  
 and invite them in.  
 Be grateful for whoever comes,  
 because each has been sent  
 as a guide from beyond.*

~ Rumi 13th C poet, in *The Essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks

Emotions are helpful messengers of imbalance. When part of us does not feel right, our emotions are pointers that help us find integrity to our whole. By showing us what is off balance, feelings assist us in knowing what changes we need to make to come back to equilibrium again. It may not always be comfortable when emotions arise and thankfully, yoga offers powerful practices to both understand and work with emotion. In the western world, most of us have not been instructed on how to skillfully work with emotion and therefore we may live and react unconsciously creating suffering.

**Samskara**

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, like all forms of yoga, is designed to bring up emotions, un-integrated feelings, thoughts and habit patterns. These are called *samskara* (mind grooves). When big emotions or reactions arise in our practice, we know it is working! This may seem opposite of what our concepts of yoga may be: "this is supposed to be peaceful—right?" Deep peace is the effect of integrating emotions and we may feel our edges and intensity along the way.

**Separation and Wholeness**

Emotions that are not fully felt are held inside us as 'separate'. Pushing emotion away creates separation from feeling our innate wholeness. Consciously or unconsciously, we can become resistant, not wanting to feel what is coming up, or afraid to feel it. This can all be happening subconsciously. The unacknowledged part or energy will try to speak to us. First, perhaps as a whisper unheard, becoming louder and louder. What has been repressed is on a mission-- a

mission to be discovered, felt, known and welcomed. The question is how loud will it have to shout to be heard? Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra offers us an opportunity to tend to the ebb and flow of our emotions while they are still whispers.

From the deep and altered states of consciousness that we flow through in Divine Sleep®, we can learn how to change the way we react to the stimuli of everyday life. Both internal and external sources of stimuli trigger reactions that are expressed as feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Beneath the incessant barrage of life's 'triggers', we often hear the inner voice of our 'judge' evaluating our actions throughout the day, often triggering even more emotion and negative beliefs. Not knowing what to do with them, nor how to process them, they can get swept under the rug.

In yogic wisdom, separation is considered to be the root of all illness. Realizing connection is what both heals and evolves us and is the goal of Divine Sleep®. As we feel qualities of expansion in the practice, we begin to welcome everything in just as it is. Our habits release, freeing us up to simply be who we actually are. In ultimate expanded awareness, there is no sense of isolation: all is unified. We are unified within ourselves and all that exists. We already are everything. It is our false thinking mind that tells us we are different, separate and individual.

### **'Story', Raga, and Dvesha**

In our earnest longing to make sense of emotion, we often attach it to a 'story' or narrative. However, the emotions are usually not connected to 'story' or another person, place, thing, or event. For example, a feeling of sadness comes up, and in a microsecond, we attach it to a story or person. 'I feel sad... Mark, it's Mark again, I am sad about Mark, oh Mark!' Perhaps the 'story' of Mark has nothing at all to do with the feeling that came up, we have just attached it to that story to do something with it, to understand it, or to dwell on the story rather than simply being with the uncomfortable emotion.

Thus, we do not directly tend to the emotion—we are actively clinging (ragas) or resisting (dveshas). Dvesha and raga are considered to be two of the five causes of suffering called klesha from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. This is a powerful concept—there are only a total of five causes of suffering as a human being, and clinging and aversion are two of them, so they are potent and to be taken seriously. From the place of the non-judgmental witness, begin to notice when you are pushing and when you are pulling in everyday life. If we can become more aware of this particular habit, then we can reduce our suffering.

To numb out an emotion we may over eat, consume alcohol, go shopping, or find other ways to sweep it under the rug (dvesha). Or we may take the energy of the emotion and act out of it or involve an act within its associated 'story' (ragas). Either way, left untended, emotions can manifest into a larger presence and force that over time requires a tremendous amount of our energy to keep down. This steals our productive forces and can lead to such things as imbalance, illness, disease, addiction, anxiety or depression.

Both yoga and science agree that energy is always present and changes form, but is not born and does not die. The same is also true for emotion, which is energy manifest. Thus, emotion is always present, changes form, but is not born and does not die. It is simply a fact of our existence. Waves keep coming as emotion and thought. Our job is to become aware, allow it to be present and fully felt so it can naturally integrate into the ocean of our whole being.

## Emotion and the Koshas

The journey of an emotion can be traced through the layers of the first three koshas. This is not always the path that sadness takes but is one example: Feelings of sadness begin in the mental-emotional manomaya kosha. It then takes root in the energy-breath pranamaya kosha with shallow breathing and reduced energy in the thoracic region. The heart chakra becomes contracted, as does the feeling in the chest. This affects the most solidified level, the physical body annamaya kosha, with feelings of heaviness in the lungs, tightness in the chest, and shoulders that roll forward. This imbalance manifests as weakness in the lungs, which can lead to reduced immunity, asthma, or upper respiratory illness.

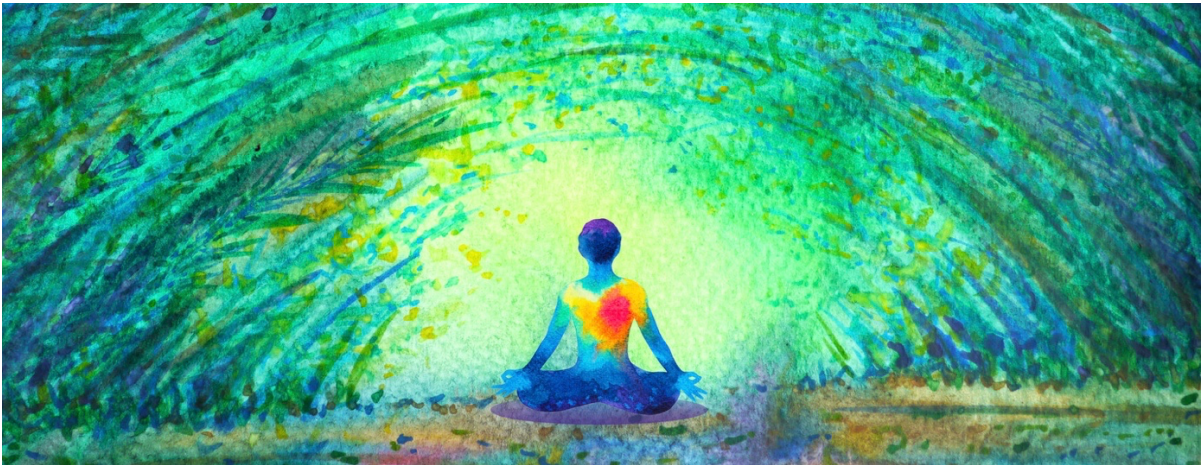
It would seem much easier to meet, greet, and integrate the emotion before it anchors itself into the energy and physical levels. When there is disruption in the physical level, we know that this is something that has been present for a long period of time, because it first travelled from the mental-emotional level, through the energy level to manifest into solid form in the physical body.

## Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

The amazing thing is that when emotions are allowed to be present and be felt, they are accepted and integrate into our whole being. Divine Sleep® is the perfect ground in which to be fully present with emotions. It is 'sitting in the fire' while being totally relaxed. It is here, in the ground of deep relaxation where we are able to be receptive and witness what we normally judge, push away, fear or react to. Vijnanamaya kosha level of being assists us by being in this 'witness' state. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra helps us to recognize that our innate wholeness has always been here.

## The Three Gunas: Raja, Tama, Sattwa

An important concept to consider are the Guna meaning 'strand' or 'quality'. In the yogic tradition, we look at mind and emotion through the lenses of the 3 Guna: *raja*, *tama* and *sattwa*. *Raja* is the energy of anger, aggression, and all fiery and volatile states. *Tama* is dull or lethargic states. *Sattwa* is energy in balance and harmony. When mind and emotions receive clear instructions from deeper levels, they function well. However, when they are clouded over by *raja* and *tama*, the deeper wisdom is clouded over. It is from this clouded place that we may unskillfully give over control of our actions. We can balance our guna by living an ayurvedic and yogic lifestyle.



### VIJNANAMAYA KOSHA Wisdom, Intuitive, Witness Body

- Witness consciousness
- Intention for integrity with one's highest values
- Core Belief work through Sankalpa Intention
- Air Element
- Anahata Heart Chakra
- Practices: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra-- Sankalpa Intention, and Stage Six the Journey; develop skills of non-doing, mindfulness, pure witnessing; discovery of subtle nature of the mind and trans-mental states of consciousness

*Vijnana* means *knowing* or *wisdom*, and refers to the higher mind. At this level, our potential is awakened, allowing us to transform limiting beliefs and cultivate wisdom from simply living life. The transformational power of vijnanamaya kosha is what every sacred text from the great spiritual traditions esteem as the path and practice to wholeness/ unity/ enlightenment.

This is the sheath of wisdom that is underneath the processing, thinking aspect of mind. 'Witness Consciousness' is that aspect of ourselves that observes without judging each level of our being including thoughts and emotions. The Witness bridges all states of mind and is our guide for deep transformation. In this layer, we experience thoughts, beliefs, images and memories from conscious and unconscious from personal, collective and archetypal arenas.

At the level of Manomaya kosha, we are like actors caught up with our drama and not able to see beyond it. From the Wisdom sheath in Witness Consciousness, we see our personal conditioning, see beyond the roles we play, and observe the larger frame of who we are. It is here that we *recognize*, and through this recognition, we de-condition our core beliefs. 'I am not my personality', is what we come to know here at this stage. A major part of the spiritual journey is gaining ever-increasing access to this level of our being. It is the level that has the higher wisdom to seek our true nature.

### Limiting Core Beliefs

Limiting core beliefs are unconscious beliefs about ourselves, others and the world. These beliefs constitute the framework that sustains our thoughts, values and perceptions. They are like a filter that gives meaning to our world and influences us on a subconscious level. When these beliefs are negative, they can sabotage our lives. It is possible to learn new and positive beliefs that will help us to change old habits and bring us beyond old walls that once stopped

us from fully experiencing life and manifesting health, happiness, abundance and connection. Some core beliefs may be with us always however we can revisit them at different stages of our spiritual journey and see that they have evolved but perhaps not disappeared. Invite and welcome them in because this is all part of the journey.

Following is an exercise to assist when you or your student may be feeling stuck or not able to hear the longings of the heart for the Sankalpa. Read the statements below out loud to yourself or your student. Notice which statement effects a reaction in your body. This may be a clue to recognizing underlying negative core beliefs. You can then create a Sankalpa positive affirmation as an antidote to change these false negative beliefs. This “call to awakening” unites our mind with deeper parts of our psyche. What are associated images, feelings, memories that arise with these beliefs? What are their opposites? Counter them with qualities of true nature: love, authenticity, bliss, unity. In Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice, we can do ‘sensing opposites’ work with them to neutralize them.

Here root statements of primary negative beliefs with corresponding positive statements. Feel free to change the statements to make them your own. Your affirmation can be stated as your Sankalpa in yoga nidra practice, and also throughout the day practiced with a Mudra that has similar energy.

### **I am powerless**

“I am a channel for the creative forces of the universe; I am powerful; I create my life.”  
Shivalingam Mudra

### **I fear failure, success, or power**

“It’s okay for me to risk being myself; I trust my power; I learn from all of my experiences; It’s okay for me to try things and fail; It’s okay for me to be a success.”  
Shivalingam Mudra

### **I have to sacrifice what I want due to scarcity**

“The universe is an abundant source of plenty and there is enough for everyone; I have everything I need and desire; I receive everything I need.”  
Earth mudras like Apana, Prithivi, and Bhū.

### **Life is a struggle**

“My life flows with ease and peace; My life is full and pleasurable; It’s okay for me to relax and enjoy life.” Anjali Mudra.

### **I am an unworthy person**

“I love myself; I accept myself; I deserve to be happy, healthy and content; I deserve to be loved. I am loved.” Hridaya Mudra.

### **I do not trust myself**

“I trust myself; I trust the higher power inside me.”  
Vajrapradama Mudra

### **I am alone**

“I am whole and complete exactly as I am; support is the ground of the universe.”  
Mandala Mudra, Bhū Mudra.

*Adapted from Shakti Gawain and Maria KaliMa.*



## ANANDAMAYA KOSHA Bliss Body

*The Self is the source of abiding joy.  
Our hearts are filled with joy in seeing him  
Enshrined in the depths of our consciousness  
If he were not there, who would breathe, who live?  
He it is who fills every heart with joy.  
---11.7.1 Taittiriya Upanishad*

- Experience as non-dual, interconnected, unified Whole
- Expansion into joy, bliss, compassion, love
- Space/Ether Element
- Vishuddha Throat Chakra
- Practices: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra—Sankalpa and Stage Six Journey; mudras, prayer, offering, resting in harmony with the creative forces of the universe and with one's own destiny; community, and selfless service.

Anandamaya kosha, the most interior of the koshas, is the sheath surrounding the Atman, the most subtle of the koshas. *Aaa* means 'bliss' and *nanda* means 'child'. Ananda is the innate joy that is an expression of our true nature. This is not bliss as a mere emotion experienced in the manomaya kosha that 'comes and goes'. *Ananda* is a whole different order of reality from that of the mind. This joy is permanent, has no limits at all, and is not an effect of or caused by external events -- it is the ground and fabric of who we are.

At the level of vijnanamaya kosha we are able to dissolve limiting belief patterns that relieve us of weight and this dissolving opens us up to the next level which is bliss. Experiences of bliss include wholeness, fullness, limitlessness, rapture, elation, and joy. Ananda is simply *being*, resting in our natural state of bliss and ease. Anandamaya Kosha describes health and healing as our essential nature.

Anandamaya kosha is our innate healing capacity. This part of us is untouched by trauma and the experience of being a human being embodied. Tapping into this sheath helps it to strengthen and to shine its light through all of the other kosha layers to heal and balance them.

Anandamaya kosha represents all of a person's positive qualities like generosity, kindness, empathy, courage, compassion, benevolence, goodwill, helpfulness and so on.

Anandamaya kosha is not the end of the journey – the word 'maya' means this is still an illusory level and not our whole or absolute reality. Bliss itself can become an attachment and a source of limitation if we endeavor to sustain it. Bliss comes and goes from our experience although it always lives deep within.



## BEYOND KOSHAS: Brahman, Atman, Oneness, Wholeness, Unified Consciousness

*Come back to your Self, the inner Sun shining eternally.*

*---Swami Amar Jyoti*

- Complete oneness
- Unity
- Realization
- Beyond Elements
- Crown Seventh Chakra Sahashrara
- Practices: not something that can be practiced directly but is a gift from Yoga Nidra and practices

Underlying the koshas is *Brahman* and *Atman*. Here we have a philosophical and experiential understanding of Self, True Nature, our Indwelling Divine Essence. We have the realization of innate unity of all that is, the concept of *Brahman*, complete oneness and wholeness as a unified field.

It is here that we remember that the individual self, like a drop in the sea, is always united with the ocean of the universe. This results in freedom from internal and external conflict, and therefore from stress from the level of Manomaya Kosha. *Atman* is the *Self*, the inner self, the eternal center of consciousness, which was never born and never dies. In the metaphor of the lamp and the lampshades, *Atman* is the light itself.

The Self is beyond limitation, the whole to which nothing can be added or subtracted. It is here that we recognize our innate oneness with creation itself. All descriptions of it remain incomplete and has at best has been described as indescribable. The realization of Self by connecting to one's whole being is the goal and intention of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

## Five Koshas and Light Guided Meditation Script

*Invite participants to practice in seated meditation position if possible.*

(Annamaya Kosha)

"Begin to notice your **physical body**... Feel the edges of your physical body... Notice everything contained within your body... Become aware of the weight and density of the body... Notice the entire physical body... Feel the ground supporting your body.

(Pranamaya Kosha)

Now go beyond the physical body to the subtle realm to notice **breath and energy**... Notice your breath and deepen it slightly... Feel the breath, energy and sensation flowing through your body... Go back and notice the physical body once again... Feel how in comparison, the breath and energy body is lighter than the physical body... You are moving closer to the light.

(Manomaya Kosha)

Now go beyond the energy body to become aware of the **mind and emotions**... Notice thoughts... Can you step back and simply watch thoughts flowing through you? Simply observing the coming and going of the thought process... Notice feelings and emotions... Observing the coming and going of emotions, always changing and shifting... You are coming closer to the light.

(Vijnanamaya Kosha)

Now move beyond awareness of mind/emotion into **Wisdom**... Notice that place in you that has been the **Witness**, the non-judgmental awareness within you... The part of you observing with love and acceptance, all the levels of who you are... You are moving closer into your own light.

(Ananadamaya Kosha)

Now go one step deeper to feel yourself expanding outward - like a cloud - expanding to connect with everything in existence... And noticing the bliss within you, that has always been here, underneath everything else... This is the **Bliss** body... Feel and receive bliss... This is the closest layer to your True Nature... You are nearest to your light.

(True Self Beyond Koshas)

Now expand into your **light**, you that is the clear light, your **True Nature**... Feel yourself as clear light shining inward, radiating outward in all directions... Feel yourself as light, and this light radiates out and touches every part of your being, all of your layers... Feel the light shine and notice how it connects with all that is in unity and oneness.

And now notice awareness of each level of being, becoming more grounded and solidified as you travel:

5. Feel yourself as the sky, the openness that clouds float in... Expanded, spacious, and pure joy.
4. Feel yourself as the Witness... Aware of witnessing... The one who observes with acceptance.
3. Become aware now of feelings, emotions... Notice any thoughts that are present.
2. Notice your breath now, breath and sensation... Breath flowing through the body.
1. And now become aware of your physical body... Feel the ground supporting you... Fully present, in this body... Become aware of any shifts that have taken place."

**Chapter 3. The Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra;  
Practices and Scripts**



**Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Eight Stages CHART**

Stage	Name	Description
Stage 1	Entry	Initial Relaxation. The transition into meditation. Settling body down into the body and present moment.
Stage 2	Heart's Intention Sankalpa	Intention, seed, affirmation. This is a short statement in positive words in present tense as though it is already happening, not something to wish for in the future. It may include symbol, color, images, and involve other senses. Soothing place can be developed at this stage-- this is your personal calming environment to come back to at any time.
Stage 3	Body Scan	Each body part is systematically named and observed.
Stage 4	Breath - Prana Awareness	Various meditations on the natural, unaltered breath. Awareness of vital energy.
Stage 5	Sense – Emotion Perception	Awareness of sensations and emotions. Often lead in complimentary pairs such as heavy/ light, contraction/ expansion.
Stage 6	Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey	Can be a series of images or a narrative journey. Can include symbols, archetypes, chakra wheels of energy, elements, or guided healing.
Stage 7	Repeat Heart's Intention Sankalpa	Reaffirm Heart's intention statement from Stage 2.
Stage 8	Return	Guided return moving backward through each Stage and each Kosha. Reawaken with cues, movement, and guide up to seated posture.

	Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Stages
Stage 1	Entry
Stage 2	Heart's Intention Sankalpa
Stage 3	Body Scan
Stage 4	Breath - Prana Awareness
Stage 5	Sense – Emotion Perception
Stage 6	Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey
Stage 7	Repeat Heart's Intention Sankalpa
Stage 8	Return

### The Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Correspond to the Five Koshas

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a method of complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation and health. This is done by systematically moving through each kosha, thereby accessing all levels of a person's being. The Eight Stage structure of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra offers endless variations and possibilities within each stage. Like an artist with a rainbow spectrum of colors on the pallet, we may mix, blend, create and renew the practice to reach optimal creative and healing potential in each session.

Stages are guidelines but may blend one into the other, overlap each other, and two may be lead simultaneously. For example, we can lead both Stage 3 Body Scan, and Stage 4 Breath and Prana Awareness together by bringing breath awareness to body parts, or planes of the body, such as the right side of the body and left side of the body.

### Pre-Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra—'Savasana Posture' and Settling In

#### Savasana Posture: Script

"Lie down on a blanket, or mat, on your back in Savasana corpse posture, which I will now guide you through:

- Place a pillow under knees if you like to help your low back to soften...
- Turn feet inward slightly pigeon toed to help relax deep in your hips...
- Tuck your chin gently toward your chest to lengthen the back of your neck...
- Bring your hands out from the hips 1.5 feet or more, palms turned upward...
- Draw your shoulder blades a little closer together...
- Make any other adjustments to your body to get comfy...
- Feel free to add any other props you'd like to use like a blanket or scarf over your eyes...
- Take a deep breath in and soften your whole body, settling down into the floor, letting go of tensions..."

## STAGE 1. ENTRY: Annamaya Kosha Gross Sheath

*Here in the body are the sacred rivers;  
Here are the sun and moon, as well as the pilgrimage places.  
I have not encountered another temple as blissful as my own body.*  
— Sahara

This is the initial relaxation to get students into their bodies, in an embodied experience often invoking Earth qualities, so that they can transition into the practice of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. The key to this stage is to get students to feel the body; to create a safe, comfortable, relaxed environment as a container for the practice; and to help students transition out of the busyness of the day and mind, and into a slower and more relaxed frame. This can be a more active part of the yoga nidra process, inviting students to make sounds, to move the body, to breathe deeply and so on.

Setting the stage for yoga nidra as a practice, not nap time, may include an intention to “stay alert and awake”. Clarifications about the practice itself can be woven in at this time: what it will do, why we practice it, how to be, and what experiences can happen. Encouragement that “there is no way to do this wrong” is very helpful and affirming at the beginning of the practice in the Entry Stage, even if you had explained it to them earlier. You can let them know it is alright if ‘sleep’ happens, and also that it is normal to not hear everything that is guided as most people flow in and out of conscious hearing during the practice.

**Note:** *It may be best to stay away from the word ‘relax,’ which may feel unattainable, or as a challenge, order, or demand, or even if there is something wrong with them if they cannot relax. The cues soften, let go, release, drop into, and others, are more effective than ‘relax’ because they let the student know what to do in the body.*

### Stage 1. Entry: Scripts and Practices

**Note:** *‘Scripts’ have “quotation marks” and are meant to read out loud. ‘Practices’ are INSTRUCTIONS or IDEAS for you as the teacher to create a script from, and are not ‘scripts’ to read out loud.*

#### A. Awareness and Movement Permission Script:

*“Allow yourself to get comfy... Make any final adjustments to get as comfortable as you can... Feel free to move or to adjust anything, any time during this journey, to support your comfort. Moving slowly and mindfully when you move... Becoming more aware now: this is a practice of awareness... Noticing your body resting, resting... Aware of your breath... Become more and more aware of each level of your being as you are guided through sensations, breath, thoughts, feelings... Allow yourself to be the observer of all that you truly are. The observer who is filled with compassion and acceptance...”*

#### B. Welcoming In Script: *This script is great for any practice. And you may also find this script helps if you think there will be sounds, or snoring, during practice.*

"As best you can, welcome everything in, just as it is... Whether sensations arise, thoughts or feelings flow through you, notice and welcome them in, as they are... Or perhaps you notice something external - like a sound that catches your attention or distracts you... If distractions happen, let it be the reminder to bring you back into deep inner focus, no need to go into agitation... Welcoming in, as best you can, everything that you notice - inside or outside of you..."

**C. No Way To Do This Wrong Script:**

"There is no way to do this practice wrong. There is no wrong thing you can experience... You may, along the way, feel relaxed, easy and peaceful... You might also happen to feel discomfort or unease - that is normal and natural during meditation... As best you can, welcome in everything that you notice, pleasant or unpleasant... What is important is to be with what is..."

**D. Settling Body Script:**

"Settle into your body... Settle your body down into the ground... Feel the ground underneath you, holding and supporting you in your practice today... Feel secure here, in your body, your body on the ground... Letting go into the ground..."

**E. All Koshas Numerical Script:** *Yes! You can read the numbers out loud if you choose. This will help students feel the progression of the kosha layers. This script counts upward.*

One: Allow your body to be heavy... Feel your body, letting yourself sink down into the ground... Letting go...

Two: Feel your breath... Feel it flowing through your body... Feel your breath and it's flow...

Three: Allow your thoughts to settle... Notice thoughts that are present for you right now... Aware of feelings and emotions... touching in with acceptance and kindness...

Four: Let personality and the roles you play drop away... Sensing your essence - pure, clear, and free... Notice yourself as the kind observer who greets all that arises...

Five: Notice a sense of joy... Feel bliss... Allow bliss to fill your body... Bliss filling your whole being..."

**F. Counting Down Through the Koshas Script:** *Counting down with numbers takes students deeper and deeper into themselves and the subconscious.*

- "Five: Soften your whole body..."
- Four: Let go on your exhalation...
- Three: Let any lingering thoughts fade...
- Two: Notice yourself unwinding...
- One: Notice joy in your body..."

**G. Doubling Ease Script:**

"Feel the level of ease within your body... Notice the level of ease... And now allow the ease to double, as you exhale your breath... Every exhalation is an opportunity to double the ease within you..."

**H. Sound Script:**

"Now notice sounds you're aware of... Hear the most distant sound you can detect... Now focus on a sound that is closer... Just notice the sounds, allowing them to be here in this moment... Now notice the sound that is closest to you, perhaps even in your own body... Notice sound..."

**I. Exhaling 'Aum' Script:**

"Each time you exhale, hear the sound of 'Aum' in your mind... You may even like to gently open your mouth and whisper the sound of 'Aum' on each exhalation... Continue on your own for a few more breaths..."

**J. 'Sighing' Breath Script:**

"Take a deep breath in and as you exhale, sigh a long sigh... And again: deep breath in and 'ahhhhh...' And now more softly, inhale and exhale 'ahhhh..."

**K. Relaxing Color Through Breath Script and PRACTICE:**

"Notice a color that is relaxing... The most relaxing color for you right now... And now imagine breathing your relaxing color through your body... Breathe your relaxing color into your belly... Let your belly completely fill with your relaxing color and feeling..."  
*(now you continue with other body parts).*

**L. Counting Down PRACTICE:** *Count down from 5 to 1, inviting a body part, or plane of the body, to soften with each number.*

**M. Progressive Muscle Relaxation PRACTICE:** *Contract, then relax the whole body, part by part. Counting can also be used to create a more refined approach. For example, squeeze hand into a fist progressively tightening as you count 1 to 5 slowly, increasing contraction as the number increase; then count 5 to 1 releasing muscles progressively. (Progressive Relaxation was originally created in 1929 by Edmund Jacobson).*

**N. Autogenics PRACTICE:** *This utilizes the interactive relationship between the body and the transformative power of mental suggestion. Invite the students to repeat in their minds: "My legs are warm and heavy" as they focus on feeling those specific sensations. Sensations: heavy, warm, soft, and so on. These sensations mimic the parasympathetic response in the nervous system - relaxation response. (Autogenics was developed by Johannes Schultz and Wolfgang Luthe in the 1930's).*

**O. Breath in Body PRACTICE:** *Bring the breath into individual body parts with inhalation, and soften and release that body part, or the whole body, on exhalation.*

**P. Planes of Body PRACTICE:** *Soften, release, or let go, the 'planes' of the body: back/front, right/left, upper half/lower half.*

## STAGE 2. Heart's Intention: Invoke All Koshas and Beyond

Sankalpa means 'intention' and refers to an ancient yogic practice of setting intention. Sankalpa is a wonderful first step to initiate any activity whether you are practicing yoga, meditation, starting a new day, or a new year. Sankalpa is also a potent part of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

*There are three elements within Stage 2 outlined below. You have the option of guiding all three, or only the Heart's Intention, which is the main event in Stage 2. All are explained in detail below this list:*

1. Intention for Today's Practice
2. Soothing Place
3. Sankalpa - Heart's Intention (this is main one!)

### 1. Intention for Today's practice Script and Practice

The teacher chooses this intention, or invites students to find their specific intention for today's practice. This intention will be not deep like the Heart's Longing Intention, but is more like 'how do you want to show up in practice today?'

For example: to stay awake and alert; to hear the voice of my heart; to rest deeply; to connect with myself deeply; to completely settle the thinking mind, etc. Example: "I connect deeply within myself during yoga nidra."

#### A. Intention for Practice Today Script:

"Now repeat after me silently in your mind: 'I remain awake and aware during yoga nidra. I remain awake and aware. Awake and aware'."

### 2: Soothing Place

This is an imaginary peaceful place that you guide your students to imagine. To create a vivid soothing place, you can invite listeners to imagine their favorite place in nature, or somewhere that is inside like special room, chair, or bed. It can be a place that exists now or in the past, or a purely imaginary place.

Guide your listeners to fully experience this place with as many senses as possible: colors, visual details, sounds, smells, and feelings they have here. There may also be objects, symbols or helper beings such as animals, pets, teachers, guides, etc. Ask them to feel the support of this soothing place all around them, holding a grounding and supportive space for them. This will help to reach deeper levels of ease within, thus giving access to deeper levels in one's being.

The soothing place is not a required component of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, yet can be an important tool when embarking on the territory of the deeper emotions and experiences that can occur in the practice. Listeners can come back to their soothing place on their own during the practice. This is especially helpful if discomfort in any level arises within their practice. It could be uncomfortable sensations, feelings, thoughts, images, or something else.

You may also bring the whole group back to their soothing place at any time or stage of the practice. Before leading Stage 5. Sense and Emotion Perception, and before or even during Stage 6. Images, Healing, Landscape and Journey, are good places to return to the soothing place. Another good time to lead the group back is if you see a student struggling or having an intense experience, it will help them and the whole group.

During yoga nidra strong emotions, cognitions and images can arise, and may open our perspective to new ways of perceiving, which at times may be daunting. Disorientation, fear and doubt can happen when new experiences are felt. For example, the structures of the psyche can begin to dissolve to experiencing oneself as 'emptiness', the infinite spaciousness of our True Nature, although enlightening, it could feel scary. The soothing place of the Inner Sanctuary can help to get grounded and secure again.

Our soothing place here is exactly what the teaching *Pratipaksha bhavana* is about: when things get too intense, take a break and go into the opposite. (Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 2.33 and 2.34). In this case, when things feel intense during yoga nidra, one can remember and return to the 'opposite' which is their soothing environment. It is important for ourselves and our students to feel and move through the rhythms of emotions and what comes up during practice, but we also do not want to become overwhelmed by it. Pairing any 'stress' with relaxation, i.e. recalling the soothing place is a tool that can be used any time of the day when things get intense, not only in practice time.

**A. Soothing Place:** *Remember to give lots of time and space for the students to imagine, sense, and feel.*

"Imagine yourself now in a place that feels soothing, peaceful and calming... Peaceful and calm... This could be somewhere that you know, or an imaginary place... It may be outside in nature that you like – such as at the beach, or in the woods - or it could be indoors somewhere that is soothing to you... Feel yourself here... And begin to see all the surroundings: the colors... light... objects... plants... or any special objects – you get to choose what is here... All things peaceful and calming for you..."

Now see yourself here in your soothing peaceful place... Feel this place calming and soothing you... Your soothing peaceful place is always here for you... At any time during practice, you can come back here... Especially if anything feels intense, odd or uncomfortable in anyway, come back to your soothing place. You can come back to this place anytime you would like to. All you have to do is remember, and you'll be back here... Your soothing place is always here, and part of who you are... Come back here when you want – it's part of the practice..."

### 3: Heart's Intention Sankalpa

Sankalpa speaks directly to your unconscious mind, which is much more receptive than your thinking mind, and it is from this place where change can take root. This makes for effortless letting go of negative habitual thoughts and feelings and opening to the limitless being that you are. By forming a positive intention and repeating it to yourself, both aloud and

silently, you are giving your mind clear, positive input, there is a tendency for the mind to accept it as the truth. The most powerful Sankalpas come from your Heart.

## Goal Setting and Heart's Intention

Intention that comes from the longings of your heart bypasses your thinking mind and personality (manomaya kosha), to find your deeper spiritual needs. Your heart's intention will always be the answer to the equation that makes you feel whole and complete. And this is why creating a Sankalpa can be much more effective than setting a 'goal' which usually comes from thinking mind – manomaya kosha - that part of you that is based on your basic needs and fears.

Goals are more difficult to bring into fruition. There is usually a particular outcome that is desired and when, being human as we are, we cannot keep up with our resolve, then we may feel disappointed, lose self-esteem or respect, or become hopeless that we can change anything.

The great thing about Sankalpa is that you feel what your heart longs for, state it as though it is already the truth, then you can release it and allow it to integrate on its own. You have stated it to your Self and to the universe, and this is enough to align it into reality. Continue to repeat, repeat and repeat it until it manifests: a week, month, year or longer, however long it is, stay true to it and it will blossom with only this seemingly small amount of effort.

Be confident that you can create your own reality. Whatever you believe, that is what you create and that is what you become. Sankalpa is created at the beginning of the practice, then restate it at the end when we are in higher mind states, making it much more effective, because we are in the disposition of complete openness. When you have found your true sankalpa, keep it until it manifests. This could be weeks, months, or years and it may over time transform or clarify on its own. This is a sure practice to bring about lasting change and release of limiting beliefs, so that you have the freedom to be all of who you are.

The conscious-ego-self may or may not believe the Sankalpa statement is true, however our true Self knows it is the truth. The unconscious mind is very receptive and listens, and takes your statement as a confirmation of the truth. There is a sense of coming together of the whole of the person in this truth. With repetition of the Sankalpa as a present truth, eventually our conscious ego self also comes to realize it.

This is a powerful stage of the Divine Sleep® process that opens and changes one's consciousness. We are so much more than our false self, manomaya kosha, would have us believe. Working with affirmation allows us to seek for our deepest truth and enter into dialogue with our true nature.

## Key points to remember, when creating Heart's Intention Sankalpa:

- Present tense
- Positive words
- Short and Simple
- Find the Essence
- Cultivate or let arise with your Sankalpa: color, image, symbol, vision using senses.
- Use all senses to vivify your Sankalpa to fully feel it.

## Present Tense

Heart's Intention Sankalpa are stated in present tense. This is speaking the language of the unconscious mind that does not understand anything except the present, and is literal, therefore cannot go into the future. If we situate our Sankalpas for the future, we strive for something that may never arise.

## Senses

Creating sankalpa using the language of the five senses will ensure that we are speaking to our deeper unconscious mind. If you engage your senses to vivify your Sankalpa, it can make it more potent for you. A color, symbol, image, vision, feeling, or energy may naturally arise in your imagination or intuition as you state your Sankalpa. Or you can associate something that fits. For example, if your Sankalpa is "My every action flows with the rhythms of my true Self" then an image or symbol such as a flower floating down a slow stream, or the flower itself, or the color sky blue are examples of what may arise or be associated with your Sankalpa. This is an intuitive practice so let your imagination guide you to what feels right for you as there is no right or wrong.

Another thing to consider is that how we process information and the world is usually dominant in one of three senses: visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), or kinesthetic (sensation/feeling). Divine Sleep® helps to develop all of these potential faculties that we all have, even when one may predominate.

## Heart's Intention in the Conscious Mind

Repeating our Heart's Intention Sankalpa during our day by reciting it out loud and silently, with a Mudra, during Divine Sleep® yoga nidra practice, recording and listening to it, repeatedly writing it, posting it around the house, and so on, creates a bridge between conscious and unconscious mind to help you release limiting self-beliefs to transform on all levels.

**Note:** It can be very dangerous to our psyche to listen to the radio or television while sleeping. Many random, unwanted or even violent seeds can be planted at this time. Hearing the news or listening to advertisements selling products can cause profound damage in this receptive state. We can be re-programmed in our deepest levels without even knowing it.

## Absolute and Relative Intention

Scientific studies on affirmation conducted by the Spindrift Foundation with sprouting plants proved that when given the absolute affirmation "Thy will be done" plants flourished and did four times as well as the other plants that had more specific relative affirmations. An example of relative affirmation is telling the divine the problem and the desired outcome like "I will recover from asthma". Absolute affirmation is four times as effective because we are not figuring out the route for spirit, we hand it over the great mystery to work it out.

There is really only one Sankalpa, and that is that we are all one. Everything is our Self. We all long to return home. It is the fragmentation that our senses encourage us to project out into the world that makes us forget that indeed we are always whole, always one, always connected

everything in the universe. The real abandonment that happens is abandoning ourselves and our wholeness. When we are in conflict with others, we are actually in conflict with an aspect of our self that we see in the other; perhaps a part of ourselves that we do not recognize or have abandoned. Our Heart's Intention Sankalpas are a step along the journey to living in wholeness and unity.

## Stage 2. Heart's Intention Sankalpa: Scripts

*The Heart's Intention Statement is integral to the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra process. First guide students to go deep inside to feel from the heart, heart-space, chest and ask 'What is my heart's deepest desire/ longing/ wish?'*

### A. Breath Heart's Intention Script:

"Begin to feel your breath, your natural breath... Aware of breath in your chest... The easy rise and fall of breath in your chest... Now go inward, deep inside and notice **'What is my heart's deepest longing?'** Let the answer come from your heart... **(give 20 seconds or more of silence)**.

From your heart's longing, create a positive statement - in present tense, as though it's already happening. Something like *'I am whole and complete exactly as I am.'* You can use this statement if you like it but if you heard your heart's wish, then state it three times silently to yourself as the truth..." **(give 20 seconds or more of silence)**.

### B. Heart-Space Flower Intention Script:

"Go inside into the heart-space... Perhaps imagining a flower, pulsing within your heart-space... Heart-space enlivening with breath... And ask **'What is my heart's deepest desire? What does my heart long for?'**... **(give 20 seconds or more of silence)**.

Now create an intention based on your heart's longing. This is a positive statement, as though it is already happening, in present tense. Something like: *'I am spacious and relaxed'*. You can use this statement if you like it, but if you heard your heart's wish, then state it three times silently to yourself as the truth. Allow any colors, images or symbols to also arise with your statement..." **(give 20 seconds or more of silence)**.

## STAGE 3. BODY SCAN & ANCHOR: Annamaya kosha

### Physical Gross Sheath

The Body Scan is also called 'body sensing', 'rotation of consciousness' and 'inner travelling through the body' etc. The Body Scan is a simplified version of the Tantric practice of *Nyasa* mentioned in both Chapters 1. and 3. (an option to lead in Stage 6). One flows awareness through the body, without any physical movement or special breathing, to bring awareness to each body part, and options to notice entire limbs, and planes of the body (front body, back body, right side and left side, and so on), and whole body. Sensing the body is very grounding and calming, allowing mental chatter to subside, to awaken to awareness of this present moment.

### Meditation: Body Scan is Awareness Only, Not a Modification

The Body Scan is led as a practice of pure awareness only. That means we are inviting awareness of what arises for our listeners when they place their attention on each body part. We are not inviting any change or modification such as to 'move the breath into', 'move the body', to 'soften', or even to 'relax' or 'let go'. We are not giving any suggestion of how the body should feel such as to feel heavy, soft, relaxed, open and so on.

During Stages 2-7 the only activity is to witness -- there is nothing to do but observe. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a practice of 'witnessing', rather than trying to enforce any change, we are noticing what is already here. With the objective to notice only, one understands that there actually is nothing to change, or that should be changed, which can help deepen a sense of ease within the practice, taking any pressure off that there is something to do, or fix, or some other way I should be feeling. Thich Nhat Hanh says 'present moment – wonderful moment'.

#### Directives to Use in Body Scan:

- Become aware of
- Notice
- Feel
- Observe
- Bring awareness to
- Witness
- Sense

#### Directives to Avoid in Body Scan:

- Relax
- Let go of
- Move your awareness
- Release
- Breathe into
- Contract
- Squeeze

### Pratyahara

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, and specifically the Body Scan, induces Pratyahara. This is turning the normally outward focused senses inward to become aware of the internal universe. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Ashtanga refers to eight limbs, and Pratyahara is one limb in the final four limbs, which all represent the mind in meditation. The body scan also develops the next limb Dharana: undistracted attention. It is only with pratyahara and dharana that we can move onward into the final two limbs -- dhyana absorption and Samadhi bliss. This process also awakens the witness consciousness as we observe the body in stillness. (More on Sutras in Eastern Wisdom, Chapter 1).

## Pacing the Body Scan

During yoga nidra, and the Body Scan, we are not trying to invoke change in the body, nor let ourselves slip into the thinking process, which is why the Body Scan is not lead too slowly. We guide it at a moderate pace so that there is no space to linger, dwell, or think. However, not so fast that the student cannot detect sensation in the time allowed. A good rule of thumb is to sense your own body parts as you are leading. That is - do the practice yourself as you lead it.

Because this is one of the beginning stages of the practice, students may be still transitioning from the busyness of everyday waking conscious life into the deeper layers. At this point, we need to speak to the conscious mind, which has a quicker pace to it than our deeper layers. If we speak too slowly and a person is still going at a faster pace in their mind-body, there is a chance that they may not be able to connect with what is being guided and go into past/future, that is thinking, or just tune out and fall asleep. *We need to meet the students where they are at now*, and slowly bring them into the more subtle places.

## Proprioception

Proprioceptive sense is awakened and strengthened by feeling body parts in Body Scan. This is very helpful for the aging process because a greater sense of balance improves and messages from the body can be more readily detected, aiding in staying healthy. Proprioception is the sense that indicates whether the body is moving with required effort and where body parts are located in relation to each other. It is what allows someone to learn to walk in complete darkness without losing balance. Kinesthetic sense is increased with awareness of flow and the feeling of movement from one body part to another. As you are leading the body scan, you may like to physically touch each of your body parts as you call them out to the students.

## The Brain and Nerves

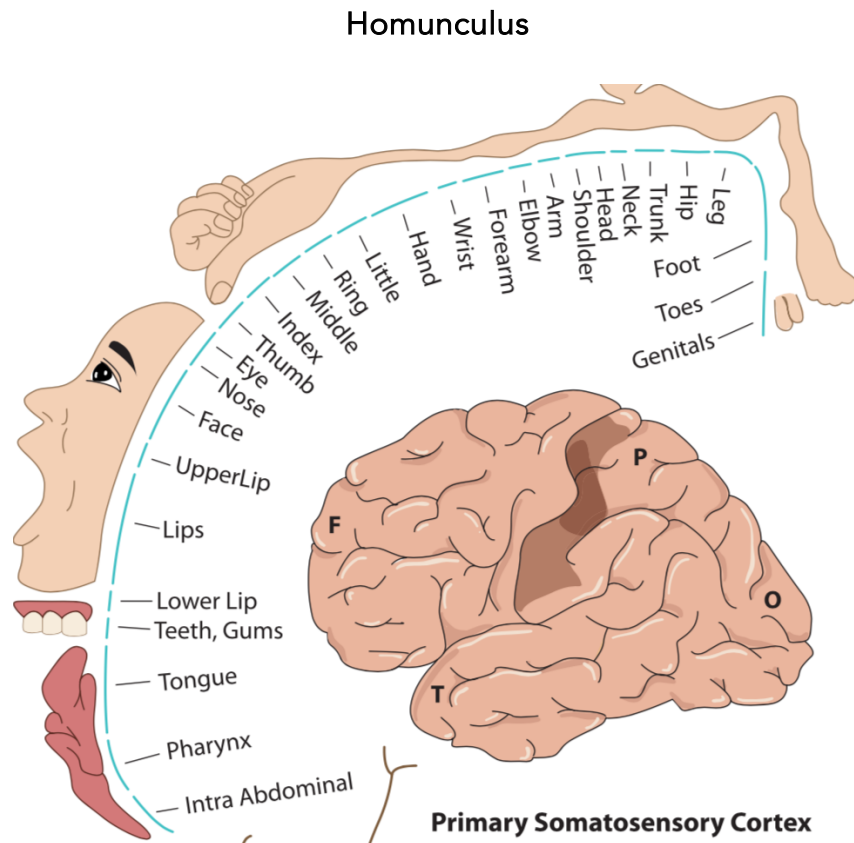
The brain is the physical mediator of the consciousness that links mind, body and emotions together. Divine Sleep® involves all the channels of the senses and communication, each body part, and most areas of the brain during the body scan stage, where we 'rotate consciousness through the body'. The cortex, spinal cord, and all of the sensory and motor nerves are connected to specific body parts. Our progressive movement of awareness through the body induces relaxation not only in physical body parts, but also in the nerve pathways, spinal cord, and the corresponding place in the cerebral cortex. Simply bringing awareness to a body part stimulates the corresponding nerves, energy channels (called nadis), and the brain. Our awareness awakens prana vital life force, and nerve capability, and also serves to soothe and relax each of these channels and body parts and corresponding place in the brain.

Furthermore, the nerves work in two directions: those that govern motor activity are outgoing, and those that govern sensory information are incoming. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is working in two directions- from the outer world in to us; and from our inner world out to the world around us. The brain is relaxed by the body and the body is relaxed by the brain.

## Homunculus

Scientists have mapped out the hologram of the physical body within the cerebral white matter. The mapping is done by stimulating the sensory or motor cortex with a weak electric current. Humans have greater emphasis on speech, eating and the hands, which enables us to perform complicated movements and acquire intricate skills, so humans have large amounts of cortex devoted to mouth, tongue, and hands. This shows up on the diagrams below as enlarged areas and represents more neurons. Diagram B represents a slice of cortex near the fissure of Rolando, running from the top of the head down toward the ear.

The diagram is called the *homunculus* (ho-MUN-q-lus), meaning ‘little man’ in Latin, because it looks a bit like a grotesque little man. Wilder Penfield, called “the greatest living Canadian” was Montreal’s first neurosurgeon, was a groundbreaking researcher and esteemed as a very original surgeon who worked especially with epilepsy. Dr. Penfield drew the first homunculus diagram in the 1940s and it looks similar to the diagrams here.



## Sequencing the Body Scan

The Body Scan flow can be a variety of sequences (i.e. which body part follows which). Generally, every area of the body is included with special focus on the hands and fingers, face, mouth, sense organs because the majority of motor and sensory nerves are located there. It is profoundly rejuvenating for the sense organs, which become over stimulated with using computers and electronics and so on. The Body Scan may be very detailed and long, or simplified down to just the main body parts to make it shorter. It may also take a variety of

paths, however beginning or ending with the mouth or hands is most powerful because they are the easiest body parts to sense.

The order of the body parts directly correlates to their order in the cerebral cortex. Knowing this, if we use the same sequence leading the Body Scan as in our brains, we are mirroring the intricate design already present within us. This ability to reflect back, and to feel into our inner blueprint repeated through our body parts is nothing short of profound. The sense of familiarity is both comforting and relaxing - we are at home in our body, inside of this place we already know. The body scan can be a bridge between our innate blueprint and the conscious awareness of this inner blueprint.

It is a good idea to maintain the same sequence of body parts in the scan with your students. The familiarity and frequent repetition of any particular sequence creates a habit in the nervous system and cortex. The familiarity and frequent repetition of the sequence creates a rapid diving inward effect upon our usually fragmented energies. If we begin Body Scan with the mouth, in time, simply bringing awareness to the mouth at any time of the day will inspire a cascade effect throughout the entire body and nervous system all on its own! We are retraining the nervous system not only how to relax and let go, but how to relax in a sequenced order.

Medical image mapping reveals that our motor cortex actually changes with experience, use, and stimulation. For example, people who read Braille (which is done with an index finger) develop large areas in the brain responsive to stimulation from the index finger. A homunculus mapped on the motor cortex of such a person would have an enormous index finger.

This is incredible supportive evidence for Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. It means that when we bring into consciousness every part of our body, just like with reading Braille, we are actually affecting change in the cortex. By developing and strengthening our brain, which generates health, increased ability and function results within the body, as well as greater awareness of feelings and sensations. Awareness is the essence of Divine Sleep®. On the physical plane, it means that we more quickly discover the imbalances that lead to illness and disease. And these imbalances are pointers that help bring us back into balance before the process of illness or disease develops and takes hold.

This ability of the brain has inspired various therapies for brain-damaged patients. In one study, people who suffered partial paralysis of an arm after a stroke were able to regain full use of the arm. Increased prana, healing, and reawakening of injured body parts and nerves, signifies great potential for Divine Sleep® as a preventative and healing practice.

### **Review Points: Brain and Mind in Divine Sleep®**

- All channels of senses and communication utilized
- All body parts
- Induces relaxation in physical body parts, nerve pathways and brain
- Works in two directions: from the outer world to the inside, and from inner world to the outer
- Brain is relaxed by the body, and the body is relaxed by the brain

- Large amounts of cortex devoted to hands, face, mouth tongue and sense organs
- Natural order of our body parts as in Homunculus as a way to guide our sequencing.
- Potency in maintaining the same Body Scan order

## Channels of Communication and Senses

You may like to include and activate one or all of the senses during the Body Scan.

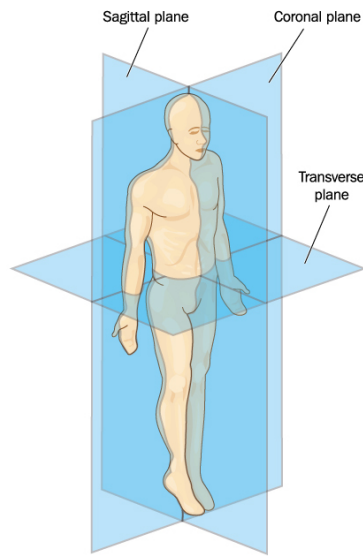
- Auditory “hear my voice as I guide you”
- Speech “repeat the name of the body part to yourself silently”
- Visual “visualize the body part in your mind’s eye”
- Proprioceptive “feel the body part internally within your being”
- Kinesthetic “sense the movement from one part to the next”

## Repeating the Body Scan

The Body Scan can be led through entire body from one to three times. Guiding from head to feet, then more rapidly from feet to head gives a feeling of wholeness and completion of the journey within the body frame. Shorter and simpler scans may be all that is necessary for students with more experience or after yoga posture class because they are already in their bodies. Beginners, elderly, or those who need more body awareness, can be led with greater detail and more numerous repetitions. For them, the Body Scan could constitute the majority of the whole practice.

## Repetition of Individual Body Parts and Sides of Body

Repeating parts of the body more than once helps the mind come into the present moment to stay focused on that body part longer than naming it just once. Students can get lost from one moment to the next, forgetting what they just felt the moment before. This is why it is also good to keep repeating the side of the body you are on if using bilateral sensing. For example: “Feel left hand.... Aware of the hand... All sensations in the left hand”.



## Planes of the Body

The simplest and quickest Body Scan is to guide the 'planes of the body'. It can also be led after the longer, detailed Body Scan.

Planes of the body are:

- "Right side/ Left side" (Sagittal Plane dividing Right and Left sides)
- "Front body/ Back body" (Coronal Plane dividing Front and Back)
- "Body from waist up/ Body from waist down" (Transverse dividing around the waist)

## Systems of the Body

For more advanced practice, or as a component of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Therapy, systems of the body, or energy channels can be led as a body scan. For example: specific organs, endocrine glands, respiratory system, circulatory system, kidney energy channel, and so on.

## Chakra Wheels of Energy

During the Body Scan, simple awareness of the seven chakra wheels of energy along the central axis of the body, can be led. This bridges Stage 3 Body Scan, and Stage 4 Energy Breath Awareness stage. There is no need to name them in Sanskrit, this is a 'scan' so simply pointing out their placement: "Notice the space between the sitting bones. Aware of the navel center. Feel the solar plexus. Notice the heart center. Throat center. Feel the third eye between the brows. Aware of the crown of the head."

## Meridians

Body Scan can be led through the system of one or more of the fourteen meridians or energy channels that are the basis of Traditional Chinese Medicine used in acupuncture and shiatsu. The meridians all correspond to specific major organs in the body.

## Nadi and Marma Points

Body Scan can be led to feel the marma energy points located in the nadi energy channels in the body. (See Marma Map in Stage 6)

## Bilateral Stimulation: *Ardha Sharira*

Bilateral stimulation, sensing right and left sides of the body and parts of the body, is an effective practice that balances not only the sides of the body but also the hemispheres of the brain. This is good to add into every Body Scan to some degree and completing with feeling the 'whole body' so that you are putting all the parts back together again. There are a variety of ways to stimulate side to side. Sensing right, then the left side of the:

- sense organs such as nostrils, ears and eyes
- body parts like hands or whole limbs
- planes of the body like back body, front body, right side of the body, left side of body
- whole right side – whole left side

Another helpful technique to increase proprioception is to feel opposite body parts at the same time. Here are a few examples, please come up with more! “Notice both:

- Right hand and left foot together (then left hand and right foot together)
- Right arm and left leg together (then left arm and right leg together)
- Chest and low back together
- Crown and soles of the feet together”

### Anchor: Scripts and Practices

The Anchor is a tool to guide students back into awake alertness again and can be lead anytime during the practice. Beneficial times to do this may be:

- In the middle of each stage
- As a transition between stages
- ‘Wake up call’ when you sense that the group drifting off, or if someone is snoring.

#### a. Affirmation Anchor

You may like to use these words, or find your own. The same guidelines apply here as to affirmations: using the present tense and positive words are most effective because we are speaking to the unconscious levels of mind.

“Repeat these words in your mind: I am awake and aware.... Awake and aware in yoga nidra.”

“Silently affirm to yourself **I am awake and aware**. Awake and aware in yoga nidra.”

#### b. Presence Anchor

Anchor students back to the present is with your presence. Simply walking around the room not completely silently, nor too loudly. Your presence may bring them back to awareness, if not, the gentle sounds of your movement may. Also, directing your presence by looking lovingly at a particular student who is snoring or seems asleep may bring them back to presence.

#### c. Sound Anchor

Anchor students back to this awake moment with sound such as clapping your hands, chiming a bell or bowl to create a full stop. The mind drops out of whatever it is doing, opens and empties for a moment. Let your students know before going into practice that you will clap. This is not meant to startle or scare anyone, simply bring them back to the moment in a spacious open environment so give them warning right before you clap “I will now clap my hands”.

## Snoring

Because a student is snoring, or seems asleep, we may assume that nothing is happening for them. I have met many students who were aware and witnessing themselves snoring and had been actually following along, or having a deep experience. Most people flow in and out of conscious hearing as they ebb and flow through various states of mind. However, if snoring is bothering other students, you may feel the need to do something about it.

It can be helpful to lead this Stage 1. Entry Script if you think sounds or snoring may occur in class. You may also find it appropriate to lead it right in the middle of yoga nidra in any stage if sound or snoring happens:

*"As best you can, welcome everything in, just as it is... Whether sensations arise, thoughts or feelings flow through you, notice and welcome them in... Or perhaps you notice something external like a sound catches your attention or distracts you... If distractions happen, let it be the reminder to bring you back into deep inner focus, no need to go into agitation... Welcoming in, as best you can, everything that you notice inside or outside of you..."*

It is important to keep your awareness, and your eyes, on what might be happening for the students during practice. You can lead from the place of noticing what you see is needed. If a student is becoming annoyed or responding strongly to something (like snoring or another sound) you can invite the whole group to:

*"As best you can, welcoming everything in, just as it is."*

Remember that at any time during yoga nidra during any stage, you can lead the group to remember their soothing place to instill calm once again. If someone is coughing, you could remind everyone that if they have a tickle in their throat or cough that they may want to try rolling onto their side as it can be less stimulating.

## Snoring Protocol

1. Stand up and lead from standing as that can help students become more alert
2. Gaze lovingly at snorer to bring more energy
3. Slowly walk nearby them as you continue to guide the group
4. Stand at their feet and gaze lovingly at, them continue to guide
5. Very slowly and gently pretend your hands are soft rain and float your hands down to their ankles to hold
6. If they still are snoring, rock ankles
7. \*If you had to do all this then MAKE SURE YOU ASK THEM TO ROLL TO THEIR SIDE or they will likely snore once you leave their area.

## STAGE 3. Body Scan: Scripts and Practices

### **A. Body Scan with Planes of the Body Script: note: ‘...’ signifies give time and space to fully feel and experience instructions.**

“Now let your awareness move through your body as you are guided. Feel each body part then move on to the next when prompted. Do not worry if you cannot feel every body part.

Sense your face... Notice your jaw... Become aware of sensation in your mouth... Feel the roof of your mouth... underneath the tongue... notice teeth... gums... tongue...root of the tongue... sense taste in your mouth... Now feel all of the parts of your mouth all together... the entire mouth.

Now feel your nose... nostrils... right nostril... left nostril... both nostrils. Feel your breath passing through the nostrils... aware of your sense smell...feel your nose. Notice your ears... feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears... backs of the ears...ear canals...inner ears. Aware of your ears hearing.

Now feel your eyes... eyelids... eyelashes... surface of the eyes... centers of the eyes... backs of the eyes... behind the eyes. Feel your eyes. Become aware of your forehead... crown... whole head... throat... neck... right shoulder...right arm... hand... right palm.

Feel right hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th fingers... All of the fingers... Feel now the whole hand vibrant with energy... Aware of right wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... Feel throat center... And notice left shoulder... arm... hand. Notice left hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th finger... All of the fingers... whole hand radiant with life... Become aware of left wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... and throat center.

Feel the chest... heart space... heart center... stomach... navel center... notice shoulder blades... between shoulder blades... ribs on the back... sense the low back... buttocks. Become aware of your whole back... Feel the right hip... right thigh... knee... right lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole of the right foot... notice big right toe... second toe... third toe... fourth toe... and fifth toe... feel all of the toes.

Become aware of sensation in the navel... left hip... thigh... knee... left lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole... feel the big left toe...second toe... third toe... fourth...and fifth toe... feel all of the toes. Feel both feet, legs... torso front and back... hands and arms... neck and head. Feel the whole body now... whole body.

Become aware of right side of the body... Now feel the left side of the body... Feel back body, side of the body facing the ground... back body... And now feel front body, side of the body facing the sky... front body... Feel the whole body now, whole body... Notice the entire global feeling of the body.”

**Columnar Body Scan Scripts**

*These Columnar scripts are helpful to keep you on target to not forget any areas of the body, and to sequence in a way that connects the body parts one after the other.*

*How To: Guide the left hand column first from top to bottom; then middle column from the top to bottom; finally the right hand column from top to bottom. \*Add your own directives such as: "Now feel your... Become aware of the..." and so on. Suggestions for vocabulary of directives:*

- ***Become aware of***
- ***Notice***
- ***Feel***
- ***Observe***
- ***Bring awareness to***
- ***Witness***
- ***Sense***

**B. Short Homunculus Body Scan Script (add directives):**

"Throat	Shoulders	Belly
Tongue	Arms	Whole trunk
Teeth	Hands	Shoulder blades
Gums	Thumbs	Whole back
Jaw	First fingers	Hips
Lips	Second fingers	Thighs
Lower lip	Third fingers	Knees
Upper lip	Fourth fingers	Lower legs
Face	Both hands	Ankles
Nose	Wrists	Feet
Eyes	Elbows	Toes
Eyebrows	Shoulders	Whole body"
Neck	Chest	

**C. Short Body Scan - Beginning With Hands Script (add directives):**

"Palms of both hands	Eyes	Toes
Feel hands alive with energy.	Head and neck together	Soles of feet
Arms	Chest	Back body
Elbows	Belly	Front body
Shoulders	Back	Right side
Throat center	Hips	Left side
Neck	Thighs	Whole body
head	Knees	Whole body
Face	Lower legs	Whole body"
	Feet	

**D. Long Homunculus - With Chakra Wheels - Body Scan Script (add directives):**

"Jaws	Right wrist, forearm,	Sole of the foot.
Lips	elbow.	Whole Left foot.
Upper Lip	Right upper arm	Whole Left leg and foot.
Lower lip	Shoulder.	
Between lips	Whole Right arm and hand	Navel center
Roof of mouth	together.	Right hip
Under tongue	Throat center	Buttock
Teeth... gums... tongue...		Thigh
All surfaces inside the	Left shoulder	Right knee
mouth.	Arm	Ankle
	Left hand	Right foot, toes.
Nose	Thumb	Heel
Aware of Breath	1st finger	Sole of the foot.
Ears... wrinkles and folds	2nd finger	Whole Right foot.
of ears.	3rd finger	Whole Right leg and foot.
Ear canals... inner ear.	4th finger	Both legs and feet
Notice ears hearing	All fingers	together.
	Whole Left hand alive with	
Eyes... eyelashes...	vibration.	Root center between
Eyelids	Left wrist... forearm...	sitting bones.
Eye sockets	Elbow	Root center.
Eyes radiant with light and	Left upper arm	
wisdom.	Shoulder.	Navel center.
Forehead	Whole Left arm and hand	Feel navel center.
Between the brows	together.	
	Throat center	Solar plexus above navel
Crown		center.
Back of head	Chest	Aware of Solar plexus.
Back of neck	Ribs	
Throat	Shoulder blades	Heart center.
Whole head	Between shoulder blades.	Feel heart center.
Head and neck	Heart center	
Throat center	Back	Throat center.
	Whole back	Throat center.
Right shoulder	Low back	
Arm	Belly	3rd Eye between brows.
Right hand	Navel center	Feel 3rd Eye.
Thumb		
1st finger	Left hip	Crown. Notice crown of
2nd finger	Buttock	head.
3rd finger	Thigh	Feel the whole body.
4th finger	Left knee	Whole body.
All fingers	Ankle	Awake and aware in this
Whole right hand alive	Left foot, toes.	resting body."
with vibration.	Heel	

**E. Body Scan with Planes of the Body and Chakras - Beginning with Hands - Script (add directives) \*NOTE: (x2) means repeat that one body part twice.**

"As a way to bring more awareness into your body, notice each body part, as it is mentioned, without needing to move anything..."

Palm of the Right hand.	Right nostril	Right hip
Right hand thumb.	Left nostril	Thigh
1 <sup>st</sup> finger	Breath in nostrils.	Knee
2 <sup>nd</sup> finger	Feel the interior of the	Ankle
3 <sup>rd</sup> finger	nose.	Foot
4 <sup>th</sup> finger	Whole nose as sensation.	Right big toe
Whole hand		All of the toes
Wrist	Notice the ears.	Whole right leg, foot and
Forearm	Earlobes	hip. (x2)
Elbow	Backs of the ears.	
Upper arm	Ear canals	Pelvis
Shoulder	Inner ears	Left hip
Feel the entire right arm,	Notice your ears listening.	Thigh
hand shoulder. (x2)		Knee
	Feel the eyes.	Ankle
Notice the Left palm.	Eyelids	Foot
Left hand thumb.	Eyelashes	Left big toe.
1 <sup>st</sup> finger	Surface of the eyes.	All of the toes.
2 <sup>nd</sup> finger	Centers of the eyes.	Whole left leg, foot and
3 <sup>rd</sup> finger	Backs of the eyes.	hip. (x2)
4 <sup>th</sup> finger	Behind the eyes.	
Whole hand	Notice both eyes.	Soles of both feet.
Wrist		Sitting bones
Forearm	Forehead	Between sitting bones.
Elbow	Crown	Root center (x2)
Upper arm	Whole head	Navel center (x2)
Shoulder	Head and neck	Solar plexus area (x2)
Feel the entire left arm,	Throat center	Heart center (x2)
hand shoulder. (x2)	Chest	Throat center (x2)
	Heart center	Third eye between the
Feel the throat center	Ribs	brows. (x2)
Neck and throat	Solar plexus just below the	Crown (x2)
Jaw	ribs.	
Mouth	Belly	Front body
Lower lip	Navel	Back body
Upper lip		Right side
Between the lips.	Now feel the back:	Left side
Inside the mouth.	Shoulder blades	Upper half
Feel all the surfaces in the	Between shoulder blades.	Lower half
mouth.	Low back – sacrum.	Whole body (x3)"
Notice the nose.		

**F. Sensing Space Around the Body Script and Practice (add directives):** *This script is led only after one of the scripts above so that there is first the awareness of the solid nature of the body before feeling the space around it. That this script AFTER one of the above scripts.*

“Sense presence around hand” (you continue with other body parts).

“Feel the Right side of the body.... And now sense awareness and feeling just beyond the right side of the body... Outside of the right side... Now feel the Right side of the body once again...” (you continue with left side, and other body parts, or planes of the body).

**G. Hollows Body Scan Script (add directives):** *This script is led AFTER one of the above scripts to feel the solid parts of the body first, then with this script, becoming aware of the body ‘hollows’.*

“Feel the hollows of the:

Mouth	Hollow where skull and spine meet.	Hip joints
Tongue	Base of the throat.	Backs of the knees.
Throat	Chest cavity	Knee joints
Nose	Lungs	Ankles
Nostrils	Belly	Arches of the feet.
Nasal passages	Pelvic bowl	
Sinuses in the cheeks.	Shoulder joints	Unite all the hollows together in one feeling, one awareness, one sensation... Allow this global body feeling to unfold entirely.”
Outer ears	Palms	
Ear canals	Elbows	
Inner ears	Underarms	
Eyes	Shoulder blades	
Eye sockets	Back	
Brain cavity	Whole torso, whole torso.	

## STAGE 4. BREATH - ENERGY AWARENESS: Pranamayakosha Breath-Energy Sheath

The respiratory, fascial, and nervous systems crossover into Pranamaya kosha level. Their physical structure exists in the physical, and their function of holding, containing and moving prana brings them to the level of the energy body. This level gives rise to the yogic anatomy of prana:

- Chakra wheels of energy
- Nadi channels including Ida (feminine cooling), Pingala (masculine warming), and Sushumna (balanced)
- Marma energy points
- Five Pranavayus currents of energy: prana, apana, samana, udhana and vyana

Practicing the Body Scan allows for a graceful transition into the awareness of subtler realms of breath and energy. Breath is intimately linked to energy and in Stage 4 we begin to discover their innate flows. Conceptually understanding the body as energy is one thing, however practicing Divine Sleep® gives us a direct experience with it. Awareness of breath and prana encourages relaxation, develops concentration, and awakens higher energies that can reach every cell of the body.

### **Meditation: Awareness, Not Pranayama or Modification of Energy and Breath**

Like the Body Scan, Stage 4 is also led as a practice of *pure awareness only*. We are not asking students to change or modify their breath or energy in any way, instead inviting awareness of their *naturally occurring* breath and energy. It is necessary to give the students MORE time to experience breath and energy than body parts in Stage 3. For example, if you give three seconds to feel the thumb, double that to feel an inhalation with six seconds. Remember that you are not 'reading' a script, but guiding an experience. If you can sense it in your body as you lead it, it will actually help your students to be able to feel it as well.

### **Directives to Use in Stage 4:**

- Become aware of
- Notice
- Feel
- Sense
- Observe
- Witness
- Sense

### **Phrases to Use in Stage 4:**

- "As you next inhale..."
- "When you next exhale..."
- "There is no need to deepen or change your breath..."
- "Using your natural breath, become aware of..."
- "Noticing the breath just as it is..."

- “As you inhale it...”

#### Directives to Avoid in Stage 4:

- Fill
- Expand
- Move breath into
- Breathe into
- Release
- Let go
- Deepen breath

### Observing the Natural Breath

Stage 4. begins by first observing the natural breath just as it is, noting inhalation, exhalation and the pauses between breaths. This is called Anapanasati and is a Buddhist form of meditation (the Buddha was a practicing yogi). One may begin on their own to notice things that they were not aware of before such as gaps between the breaths, or the direction of energy or breath flows through the body.

#### Breath Meditation

Yogic and Buddhist forms of meditation offer wonderful inspiration for the Breath Awareness stage. There are thousands of practiced and documented meditations on the breath and we can borrow and apply almost any for this stage. You may also like to invent or create your own. Refer to the “Resources section” for books and teachers for more ideas than are presented here.

#### Counting Breaths

One-pointed focus can be further developed with invitation to sense the more subtle sensations of breath. Mind focus without distraction *dhyana* can be tremendously strengthened by counting the breaths. Counting backwards from ten back to one tends to bring people into deeper relaxation and would be good to use near the beginnings of practice like in the Entry Stage 1. or Stage 4. Or counting from one to ten, tends to have a more energizing and awakening effect, and is best used when reawakening near the end of a practice, like during the Return Stage 8.

It is easy to get distracted when counting the breaths and lose track of the number. When that happens, it is best to start all over again from the first number again, not trying to figure out where we left off, or becoming agitated or disheartened that we lost track. The aim is to strengthen the mind, not necessarily to count all the way through. And the mind *is* strengthening by trying to count breaths, even if one gets lost somewhere along the line. With patience and acceptance, we begin again and again, in a state of Beginners Mind, and as time goes on, increased focus on the numbers, the whole meditation, as well as in our day-to-day activities will be noticeable. This is a powerful practice to persevere with, as it will allow progress into further stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra.

### **Psychic Pranayama**

Pranayama breathing techniques led in psychic form, that is performed energetically rather than physically directing the breath, can be both useful and powerful. For example, nadi shodhana alternate nostril breathing is lead energetically without using the hand to direct the switch in the nostrils. Where the mind goes, the prana follows and the breath will flow through the alternate nostrils. Balancing the nadis, hemispheres of the mind, yin and yang, masculine and feminine are the effects of nadi shodhana.

### **Nadi Energy Channels, Meridians and Marmas**

Breath awareness can incorporate awareness of the chakras, nadis or meridians, or marma points. 72, 000 thousand or more nadi energy channels are located throughout the body in the fascia, and are also located outside of the body like an aura. The three main clusters of nadis travel in and around the spine: Ida (left nostril feminine), Pingala (right nostril masculine), and Sushumna (central balanced). The fourteen main meridian energy channels from Traditional Chinese Medicine represent the elements and organs can also be useful for guiding Stage 4 as a map of energy. Marma points are like smaller chakras or energy centers located throughout the nadis, just as tsubo points are along the meridians.

### **The Chakras and Prana**

The chakras are housed in the prana body, however their full expression pierces through all koshas. Chakras are a model of spiritual evolution and represent the potential for transformation at all levels of our being. Each chakra has a multi-dimensional meaning and function and during Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra we can come to feel and know the chakras as a way to deepen comprehension of oneself at each level. Sensing the chakras is done rapidly here in Stage 4, similarly to feeling its place in the body during the Body Scan. Deeper exploration of the chakras would come later stages combined with Stage 5. together when moving into thoughts and emotions, or in Stage 6. where they can be explored multi-dimensionally.

Focus could be on one chakra, on three neighboring chakras, or all eight. Taking breath awareness into the chakras can assist in a deeper experience of them. It is important to be aware of the level of your students and to keep the exercises simple enough relative to their knowledge and experience so that the rational cognitive mind does not become stimulated in trying to figure out something new so they do not begin to think.

## **Stage 4. Breath-Energy Awareness: Scripts and Practices**

*Guide spaciously to allow time for the natural breath. For pacing, feel your own breath while leading. Ellipses '...' signify 2-3 of your breaths. State with each practice once or many times these phrases or something similar:*

### **Phrases to Weave Into Stage 4. Scripts:**

- "As you next inhale..."
- "When you next exhale..."
- "There is no need to deepen or change your breath..."
- "Using your natural breath, become aware of..."
- "Noticing the breath just as it is..."

**A. Study of breath Script:**

“Observe your natural breath... Notice each inhalation... Each inhalation... Now feel the exhalations... Each exhalation... Become aware of the pauses between the breaths... The pauses... Now feel the temperatures of your breath... Temperatures... Become very interested in your breath... Nothing else exists right now but your breath... Aware of your breath... Continue to notice your breath flowing in this way on your own now...”

**B. Breath in Belly To Nose Script:**

“Become aware of your natural breath, unforced breath... Feel breath in the belly... Without changing your breath in any way, notice the rise and fall of the belly with the breath... Feel breath in the chest... No need to deepen your breath, simply notice the natural expansion of the chest with the breath... Breath in the chest... Now become aware of breath in the throat... Feel breath in the nostrils... Breath in the nose... Aware of the sensations of breath... Notice the incoming and outgoing breath...”

**C. Wave Breath Script:**

“Now notice your breath... Your natural breath as it flows through you... Feel the ‘in’ breath... Note the ‘out’ breath... As you exhale, become aware of a wave of breath and energy passing downward through your body... From crown to feet, downward the breath flows...

And as you inhale a fresh wave of breath and energy flows upward through your body... As you exhale, notice the downward wave flowing through your body... Inhale feel the fresh wave upward... Continue to notice your breath flowing in this way on your own now...”

**D. Sensation of Breath and Body Script:**

“Become aware of your breath, unaltered breath... Begin to feel sensations in the body as your breath naturally flows through... Aware of places of ease... Notice places of openness... Aware of sensations in the body with your breath... Perhaps places of tightness or tension – simply notice. There’s nothing to fix or change here... Noticing the breath... Aware all the various sensations in your body... Aware of breath... Aware of sensations... Continue to notice your breath flowing in this way on your own now...”

**E. Breath Gaps Script:**

“Become aware now of your natural breath as it flows through you... No need to change your breath... Feel your breath flowing easily and rhythmically through your body... Notice your breath and follow it... Now begin to feel the pause between the inhale and exhale... Notice the gap... Now begin to feel the pause between the exhale and inhale... Without holding or changing the breath, notice the pause between breaths... Continue to notice your breath flowing in this way on your own now...”

**F. Vyana Vayu Breath Awareness Script:**

“Become aware of your breath now... Feel the inhalation... Without changing your breath, notice the inhale travelling to your center... natural inhalation... Each inhalation

travels to your core... Feel your natural exhalation... And as you exhale, feel the breath radiating outward through the limbs... Inhale flows inward to center... And as you exhale breath naturally flows outward into arms, hands, legs, feet... Inhale flows to core... Exhale flowing outward... Keep noticing your breath in this way on your own now: Inhale flows to core, exhale flows to the periphery..."

**G. Counting Breaths Script:**

"Observe your breath... Natural breath... unaltered breath... Feel the inhalation... Aware of exhalation... Now count your exhalations from 10 back down to 0. If you get lost or lose track, without judgment or agitation, begin again at 10..."

*(wait about 20 seconds)*. Notice your breath... Counting your breaths...

*(to complete)*: Now let go counting the breaths."

**H. Psychic Nadi Shodhana Script:**

"Become aware of your breath... Your natural breath breathing through you... Begin to notice each inhalation... Become aware of every exhalation..."

- Now imagine that your next exhalation flows outward through your left nostril.
- And the inhalation flows in through the left nostril.
- And as you next exhale it flows outward through your right nostril.
- And inhales through your right nostril.
- And feel your breath awareness continuing in this pattern: inhale through left-exhale right. Inhale right- exhale left.

Continue on your own now... Keep your mind focused..."

### Combination Stages 4, 5 & 6 Together: Scripts

You can combine Stages 4 and 5; or Stages 4, 5 and 6 together. This means that you can guide breath-energy awareness with emotion or thought qualities; imagery, healing etc. Here are some examples for you to begin with, and feel free to come up with your own ideas and combinations.

**A. Calm Peace Breath Script:**

"Notice your breath, your natural unaltered breath... And now as you next inhale hear in your mind 'CALM'... 'Calm' with each inhalation... Calm..."

And now as you next exhale, in your mind, hear 'PEACE'... peace with each exhale...

As you inhale - CALM... As you exhale - PEACE... Continue noticing your breath with these word qualities on your own now..."

**B. Heart Center Breath Script:**

"Feel your natural breath... Follow your breath from your nostrils... throat... chest... belly... Follow the breath's natural flow through your inner body... Watch your breath...feel its rhythm...feel it in your body...feel breath in your chest...feel your breath..."

Now focus your attention in the heart center, in the middle of your chest... Feel your heart center... Without changing your breath in any way, feel your breath nourishing and softening your heart center... Aware of your breath nourishing this center of feeling...”

**C. Chakra Wheels of Energy and Breath Script:**

“Notice your breath, your natural breath... Feel your breath flowing through you, easily and rhythmically... Feel now your root center - between the sitting bones... As you next inhale, notice your root center filling with breath, without even trying or making effort, it fills with breath... And now as you next exhale, notice if there is a color, feeling, sensation, or something else here, in your root center...

Become aware of your navel center as you next inhale... Navel center... And each time you exhale, notice if there is a color, feeling, sensation, or something else here in the navel center... Feel all its details like its color and texture... Inhale becoming aware – and as you exhale - notice... Breathe like this on your own... Notice if you sense a color here, in your navel center.

Bring your awareness to your solar plexus center... As you next inhale, perhaps sensing its warmth... Each time you exhale feel your breath radiate outward... Continue noticing breath like this... Notice if you sense a color, or something else that comes to you, here, in your solar center...As you next inhale, allow your awareness to travel to your heart center... And as you exhale, sense your heart center expanding like petals of a flower... Keep noticing your heart expanding with your breath on your own... Notice if you sense a color here, in your heart center, sensation or something else...

Become aware now of the throat center as you inhale... And each time you exhale it becomes perhaps more spacious and open... As you inhale become aware of throat – exhale, sense spaciousness... Continue to notice on your own... Notice if you sense a color, or anything else here, in your throat center...

Now as you inhale, feel your third-eye center between the brows... And as you exhale third-eye softens... Inhale aware of third-eye – exhale, it softens... Notice if you sense a color or anything else here, in your third-eye center... Now become aware of the crown of the head... As you inhale, sense crown... And as you naturally exhale, perhaps notice the crown radiates energy... Notice if you sense a color, or anything else here, in your crown...

And now every time your breath flows, feel all these energy centers come into balance and harmony... alive within you...”

**STAGE 5. SENSE - EMOTION PERCEPTION: Manomaya Kosha  
Mental-Emotional Sheath**

*An anxious mind cannot exist in a relaxed body.*

— Edmund Jacobson

According to yoga, it is here in the mental-emotional level that the root of all stress related and psychosomatic illness begin. In the yogic perspective, all stress is from the misunderstanding of separation – *avidya* - and the remaining Five Kleshas: egoism, clinging, aversion, and fear of the unknown. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra works to transform stress. It is calming, soothing, nurturing and is a key tool for stress-management. As wholeness and inner connection is experienced in practice, we begin to understand that as the ground of who we are *is* whole, and that it can be remembered during the ups and downs of daily life. Additionally, with Sankalpa intention, we have the ability to change our negative core beliefs called *vasanas*.

In Stage 5. we enter into the inner environment of the emotions, which are directly linked to the mind. The body-mind connection is facilitated by bringing to awareness the more subtle sensing capacity of the body, which are the 'sense perception' mechanisms in the skin and body that perceive and measure pleasure and pain, heat and cold; as well as the capacity to compare one part of the body to another. The ability of the body-mind to detect subtle perception is strengthened in this stage, creating bridge between the physical and subtle body.

**Sensitivity of Guide and Returning to Your 'Soothing Place'**

Because it can elicit memories and feelings from deep within the unconscious during Stage 5., we need to have an awareness of students' aptitude, their mental-emotional well-being, and their level of experience. As we lead more and more yoga nidra with experience, we will begin to learn how to follow our students' emotional experience with comfort and confidence in classes and individual sessions. Being sensitive to the students, where they are at, and what is appropriate for them is paramount. Before or during Stage 5 we can bring back their soothing place, or other feelings of calm and peace within (like a calming feeling and color in the body). The soothing place can be guided by the teacher, and we can remind listeners that they can guide themselves back there anytime, during any stage, on their own when they want to.

## Sense – Emotion Perception in Kramas / Steps

1. ONE sensation.
  2. ONE sensation and it's OPPOSITE; go back and forth; feel them together.
  3. POSITIVE emotion like joy, happy, and peace. These are *Bhavanas*.
  4. \*\*\*POSITIVE emotion and it's OPPOSITE chosen by student; and go back and forth; feel together.
  5. \*\*\*The EMOTION THAT HAS BEEN COMING UP for you lately; OPPOSITE emotion that has been coming up for you lately; and go back and forth between the two; feel them together.
- \*\*\*Note: make sure your students are ready, aware and want to do these before leading them as they can elicit strong experiences.

Krama means 'succession in steps' and is a way to practice what is appropriate in stages. Not all of these steps/kramas are necessary or appropriate for every student. Some of the kramas listed here are 'advanced' and are for you to practice yourself regularly before leading students.

Stage 5. begins with **1. Awareness of ONE sensation**. Followed by - **2. Awareness of ONE sensation and its OPPOSITE** - guiding back and forth a few times between opposites, and sensing both sensations at once. (Feeling opposites together may be impossible to do, but acts as a full stop in the mind to help the thinking mind drop out – like a Zen koan).

When positive emotions and qualities are meditated on they are called Bhavanas used for 'spiritual cultivation'. **3. Awareness of a POSITIVE emotion** like happiness, peacefulness, or gratitude. As guides, it is important to go slowly, and to repeat the first steps/kramas, in order to get use to working with sensation and emotions and to also integrate them.

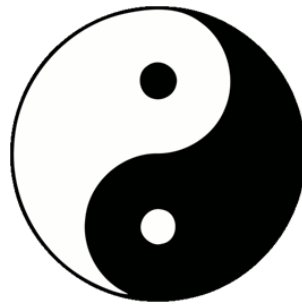
Experienced in small doses regularly, the intensity of an emotion softens naturally without much effort, reaction or discomfort. You can also invite awareness of where they feel and sense the positive emotion in their body: *"what color arises with this emotion; what color would you associate with this emotion; does the emotion have a shape and size in the body; does this emotion have an associated symbol, image, landscape, or other sensory experience of the positive feeling?"*

**4. Awareness of OPPOSITE emotion – \*\*\*Note:** This can elicit much more intense experiences and it is not recommended to lead this step to a group class until you know every individual in the class is a) ready for it; and b) is in agreement to take the practice into this deeper level.

Guide feel a positive emotion, then to find the 'opposite' of the positive emotion. Another way is to ask, "if happiness was not there, what would be there?" It works best to allow students to find their own 'opposite' as there are numerous opposites to every emotion. You do not need, and its recommended not to, suggest negative emotions: listeners will be able to find their own.

**\*\*\*Note:** Steps 5 and 6 go together and you would always lead them together. This can elicit much more intense experiences and it is not recommended to lead this step to a group class until you know every individual in the class is a) ready for it; and b) is in agreement to take the practice into this deeper level.

**5. Awareness of the EMOTION THAT HAS BEEN COMING UP for you lately. 6. Awareness of the OPPOSITE emotion that has been coming up for you lately; and go back and forth between the two.** This gives students a way to work with their current situation and personalizes this step for them. Generally, the emotion coming up for them lately is usually a more negative one, and its opposite will be the antidote to that emotion. E.g. "Fear keeps coming up for me lately. The opposite, or if fear was not here, I would feel open, expansive and free."



*Yin Yang Symbol*

## Sensing Opposites

Stage 5. can involve experiencing a sensation or emotion, then invoking its polar opposite, like hot-cold, heavy-light, happy-sad. We move back and forth between feeling one and then the other, then holding both at the same time to feel the opposites simultaneously. Feeling opposites at the same time is impossible for the mind to do, so mind drops out and emptiness is experienced, if only for a moment. In this powerful practice, *opposites neutralize each other.*

Going between two opposites helps us to learn things about the other that would not have arisen from simply feeling one. The opposites serve to 'un-stick' one another. Its opposite may bring clarity when its essence stands out as one of them frees the other. Eventually we become equanimous with both. The real law of the opposites may eventually come -- we are actually neither.

A law of nature is that when we sit with a sensation or emotion without identifying with it, it eventually turns into its opposite. That everything eventually turns into its opposite - is the basis of Yin Yang theory from Traditional Chinese Medicine and is represented by its symbol above. The black eventually turns into white and white turns into black.

It is both powerful and personal to the student if we suggest the first emotion or sensation, then let them feel and find their own opposite. There is not one opposite but can be dozens for most emotions and all of them are correct.

### **BRFWA: Breathe, Relax, Feel, Watch, & Allow**

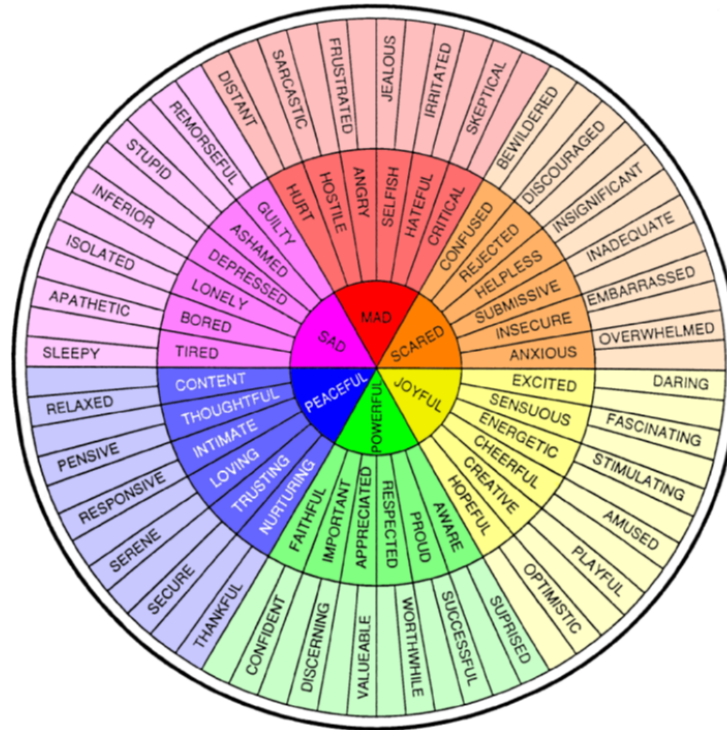
From the Kripalu Yoga tradition (created by teacher Grace MacLeod and others) 'BRFWA' is an anachronym, and a powerful tool that allows students to be able to 'be with' fluctuations of our mind and emotions. Read more about it in Angela Wilson's article in the Appendix. Try it out: while sustaining a yoga posture, or off the mat when you are sustaining a posture in life, try this recipe, which in essence takes you through the five koshas:

- Breathe
- Relax
- Feel
- Watch
- Allow

Core Families of Feelings					
JOY AND CONTENTMENT	FEAR AND ANXIETY	ANGER AND FRUSTRATION	SADNESS AND GRIEF	FAUX FEELINGS	
Adventurous	Afraid	Aggravated	Bored	<i>Interpretations masquerading as feelings. Sometimes a persons 'story':</i>	
Affectionate	Alarmed	Agitated	Depressed		
Alive	Anxious	Angry	Disappointed		
Amazed	Apprehensive	Annoyed	Discouraged		
Amused	Bewildered	Appalled	Disheartened		
Astonished	Cautious	Cranky	Dismayed		
Calm	Concerned	Disgusted	Despairing		Abandoned
Confident	Confused	Exasperated	Exhausted		Abused
Content	Disconcerted	Frustrated	Helpless		Attacked
Giddy	Disturbed	Furious	Hopeless		Betrayed
Glad	Dubious	Judging	Hurt		Bullied
Grateful	Embarrassed	Impatient	Lonely		Cheated
Happy	Impatient	Indignant	Melancholic		Ignored
Hopeful	Jittery	Infuriated	Sad		Intimidated
Inspired	Nervous	Irritated	Tired		Invisible
Intrigued	Overwhelmed	Resentful	Troubled		Let Down
Invigorated	Panicky	Upset			Manipulated
Joyful	Perplexed				Misunderstood
Curious	Puzzled				Neglected
Delighted	Reluctant				Put Upon
Eager	Restless			Rejected	
Ecstatic	Scared			Rushed	
Encouraged	Shocked			Un-	
Excited	Stressed			Appreciated	
Fascinated	Terrified			Used	
Friendly	worried			Grief (there are many feeling underneath grief)	
Loving moved					
overjoyed					
peaceful					
Pleased					
Proud					
Refreshed					
Relaxed					
Relieved					
Satisfied					
Stimulated					
Surprised					
Thankful					
Thrilled					
Touched					
Tranquil					
Trusting					

From the booklet "Compassionate Communication and Empathy's Awakening", a free download through the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Academy:  
<http://nvctraining.com/courses/free-courses/index.html>

Feeling Wheel Chart



Polar Sensations and Polar Emotions

Polar Sensations

warm	cool
liquid	solid
heavy	light
moist	dry
wet	parched
contracted	expanded
open	tight
soft	tense
quiet	loud
small	large
spacious	grounded
sinking	floating
full	empty
outer	inner
strong	soft
left side	right side
back body	front body
top half of body	lower half of body

Polar Emotions:

(Can have numerous polar opposites)

peaceful	nervous
calm	anxious
anchored	unstable
grounded	scared
	abandoned
	exposed
	betrayed
content	discontent
	bored
	unfulfilled
alert	sleepy
	numb
	groggy
bliss	sad
confident	defensive
inspired	indifferent

## Witness Consciousness

To Witness without pushing against, nor pulling nearer, changing it, nor even commenting, allows one to play the role of Vijnanamaya kosha Wisdom- Witness sheath. This is a powerful practice that serves to neutralize reactions to any stimulus, sensation or emotion. Standing in the ground of true Self, one can simply observe the changing weather patterns of sensation and emotion and thought that flow through us endlessly. Everything is always changing - *parinama* in Sanskrit. When we identify with our emotions, we are slaves to them and can only react, not respond skillfully.

We learn to anchor into what does not change, our Self, and to not become annoyed or agitated by sensations, or go along for the ride of the waves of emotion. Sensation and emotion will never stop completely, and we cannot effect change in that arena as easily as we can effect change in our responses. We are turning 'reacting' into 'responding'. We go from knee jerk reaction to a skillful means of witness and observing as response.

Witnessing reveals 'what is', and we begin to gain understanding and insight into the nature of both emotion and thought, and what messages or important information is underlie them. For example, we may feel sad. Underlying the sadness, we find that it is a messenger or signal telling us we are not fulfilled, and that we need to redirect our energies and attention to what would be fulfilling.

## Core Beliefs - Vasanas

Negative core beliefs - *vasanas* - are the seed beliefs that keep one limited, small, and often steer one in the wrong direction to knowing true Self. Negative core beliefs bring up emotion often felt viscerally like a gut reaction and go beyond 'reason'. Becoming aware of a *vasana* and then by practicing 'sensing opposites' can help one go beyond to dislodge the belief to become open to the more expanded truth about themselves, others, or the world.

Some typical core beliefs could be: "I am not enough", "I am unlovable", or "There is something wrong with me". The *vasanas* are all housed in one of the seven chakra energy centers. Before practicing Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, write down a negative core belief. Go inward and find its opposite for you. Bring this pair back to work with it during Stage 5. Work with becoming aware of each feeling separately and fully, then go back and forth between them. Finally, hold them together simultaneously. Deep shifts may occur in core levels of being.

## Systematic Desensitization

The practice of *Systematic Desensitization* in psychology involves recalling in the imagination a triggering experience or phobia, then pairing it with an imagination of something relaxing, such as our Inner Sanctuary. With sufficient repetition through practice, the trigger loses its anxiety-provoking power. Although it was originally developed to be administered by a psychotherapist, systematic desensitization has been shown to be effective when self-administered as well. Actually, the greatest gains come through one's own regular practice.

Veterans back from war, police officers, and others who have had traumatic experiences, may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may become triggered by common sounds.

For example, the sound of an airplane could trigger a nervous system, mental and emotional reaction that takes one into a heightened flight or fight response, where there may be visions, feeling a need to defend and thus attack, run to hide, and so on. In the relaxed state of yoga nidra, if the memory of the sound of the airplane is linked with the Inner Sanctuary or a peaceful calming image or symbol, a great switch can take place where the sound begins to trigger the relaxation response rather than a PTSD response. This is incredible and offers so much more influence and empowerment to the person than taking medication to numb out. Of course, it must be done slowly in stages not to stimulate the person into reaction again.

### Return to Soothing Place: Scripts

**A. Permission to go back to your Soothing Place Script:**

“Now you will feel various sensations in your body as we move into the next stage. Recall that if you feel uncomfortable, you can tune me out and come back to your soothing place at any time. Give yourself permission to return to your soothing place when you like, remembering it is always here for you.”

**B. Guiding back to Soothing Place Script:**

“Now recall your soothing place – your relaxing, calming place... Imagine all of the details of this place... See yourself here looking relaxed and peaceful... Stay here as long as you wish... And come back anytime you like. You are in control...”

## Stage 5. Sense – Emotion Perception: *Scripts and Practices*

Sense and notice in your own body, mind and being, what you are guiding to your participants. Give students even more 'silent' time between directives than Stage 4. Breath-Energy Awareness. This gives enough silent time to be able to fully experience each directive that you offer. For example, for instructions to 'feel heavy', give the students silence for 7-seconds or longer, and then add a few experiential suggestions such as 'heavy, like you are filled with sand'.

### Sense – Emotion Perception in Kramas / Steps

Five Steps are presented here. Although you will lead them in a consecutive order, they are all optional. For example, lead 1-2-3 and stop there. Or lead 1-2-3-4 and stop there. #5 is a bit different in that you don't need to lead #4 with #5: for example lead 1-2-3-5 (without #4).

Each Step has a varying degree of intensity. #1 has the mildest effect. #2 will dig in a little deeper. #3 are already sprinkled throughout the whole yoga nidra script-journey and will likely feel like a sweet relief.

#4 is a leap into a much fuller experience and has the potential to be like a 'therapy' and thus is not advised to lead except for students who are ready for this depth and perhaps only one-on-one sessions. #5 can also produce a strong experience, thus lead it with sensitivity to your students' readiness for it.

1. **ONE sensation.**
2. **ONE sensation and it's OPPOSITE; go back and forth; feel them together.**
3. **POSITIVE emotion like joy, happy, and peace. These are *Bhavanas*.**
4. **POSITIVE emotion and it's OPPOSITE chosen by student; and go back and forth; feel together.**
5. **The current EMOTION THAT HAS BEEN COMING UP for you lately; OPPOSITE emotion that has been coming up for you lately; and go back and forth between the two; feel them together. \*\*\*Note: make sure your students are ready, aware and want to do these before leading them as they can elicit strong experiences.**

1. **ONE SENSATION:** *You can also use many other individual sensations such as soft, warm, heavy, quiet and so on from the lists and suggestions in the charts, or find new ones.*

#### **A. Open and Relaxed Script and Practice:**

"Feel a place in your body that feels open and relaxed... Become aware of the sensations of this open place... Completely feel the sensation of open relaxation in this place... And now, allow the feeling of openness and relaxation to spread through your body, and to completely fill your body. Feel relaxation in your belly..." (*you continue with large areas of body: arms, legs, torso, head*).

**2. ONE SENSATION AND IT'S OPPOSITE:**

**A. Contraction - Expansion Script:**

"Now imagine your body feeling contracted... All muscles and tissues pulling inward... Inward flowing like a seed... Tiny tight small... Feel sensations of contraction in your body... How does it feel to feel contraction?..."

And now feel the opposite... Feel your body expansive... Open and spacious... Outward flowing... Feel the sensations of expansion... How does it feel to feel expansion?..."

Now feel a place in your body that feels tight, contracted... Let that feeling of contraction spread through your body... Feel contraction...

Now feel a place in your body that feels expansion, open and free... Let that awareness of openness spread through your whole body...

And now see if on your own, you can go back and forth, between feeling contracted and expanded, on your own...

Now feel both together: notice contraction and expansion at the same time..."

**B. Heavy - Light Script:**

"Now imagine your body becoming heavy, very heavy and sinking into the ground... Heavy, as though you are filled with sand... Body heavy sinking into soft receptive ground underneath you... Body heavy and sinking... Heavy and sinking... How does it feel to feel heavy?..."

Now imagine your body becoming light... Light as a feather... Light and floating...

Feel heavy again... Completely heavy and dense...

Now feel light again...

Go between feeling heavy and light on your own now...

Now feel both heavy and light together..."

**C. Fullness - Emptiness Sensation Script:**

"Feel your body and become aware of feeling fullness in your body... Feel fullness in your entire body... Arms and legs full... Torso full... Feel fullness... How does it feel to feel fullness?..."

Now feel empty, perhaps hollowed out... Sense emptiness, empty like a cup... Feel it through your whole body... How does it feel to feel empty?..."

Now feel fullness again... Completely full... Feel full...

Now feel empty again. Feel it entirely... Now go back and forth between the feeling full and empty on your own.... Now feel both full and empty together. Feel them together..."

**D. Spacious and Its Opposite Sensation Script:** *Listener finds their own opposite, rather than the teacher suggesting one:*

"Find a place in the body that feels spacious and open... Completely and fully feel it... Now find a place in your body that feels the opposite of spacious... Feel it fully..."

Now feel the spacious open place again...

Feel the opposite feeling again...

Now notice both places at the same time... Feel them simultaneously together."

**More Suggestions for Opposites:**

Warm - Cool

Liquid - Solid

Inside - Outside

And more...

## Sense Perception with Emotions: Scripts and Practices

### 3. POSITIVE EMOTION - BHAVANA

You can use other 'positive' emotions such as energized, cheerful, creative, optimistic, playful and so on from the Feeling Wheel and Polar Emotions lists, or find new ones on your own.

**E. Positive Feelings in Body Script:**

"Feel happiness, happy, joy... Remember feeling happy... Where does happiness live in your body?... Notice where you feel it... Let happiness fully expand through your body, through your whole being..."

**F. Content Feeling with Color Script:**

"Feel content... Content - perhaps like a cat stretching in the sunlight... Feel content... Notice if there is a particular place you feel contented in your body... Let the feeling of contentedness fully unfold throughout your body... Feel content... Notice if there is a color, or associate a color with the feeling of contentment... What is the feeling of content for you? Allow this color and feeling to completely fill you..."

**4. POSITIVE EMOTION AND ITS OPPOSITE \*\*\*Note: make sure your students are ready, aware and want to do these before leading them as they can elicit strong experiences.**

**G. Content and It's Opposite Script:**

"Feel your body, and become aware of feeling content. Feel contentedness in your entire body. Feel content.

Now feel its opposite, feel the opposite of content. What is the opposite of feeling content for you? Sense it fully. Feel it in your whole body. Now feel content again. Completely feel content. Now feel its opposite. Feel it entirely.

Now see if you can go back and forth between the two on your own.

Now feel both contentment and its opposite together. Feel them together..."

**5. CURRENT EMOTION AND ITS OPPOSITE \*\*\*Note: make sure your students are ready, aware and want to do these before leading them as they can elicit strong experiences.**

**H. Current Emotion – Optional Opposite Script:**

"Now notice the current emotion that has been coming up for you lately... Feel it fully... Allow yourself to feel it fully now... Feel it in your body... Notice how it feels, and if there is a color or sensation with it...

Now notice the opposite emotion... What is the opposite for you?... Feel it fully now... If the emotion that keeps coming up for you was not there, what would be here?... If the initial emotion were not here, how would you feel?... Feel that opposite emotion fully in your body... Notice if it has a color, place in the body, particular sensation...

Go back to feeling the emotion you are working with again... Allow it to fully fill you...

And now feel it's opposite... Feel it through and through...

On your own, go back and forth, feeling the emotion and it's opposite...

Now simultaneously hold both emotions at the same time... Now notice if you can feel them both together..."

## STAGE 6. IMAGES, ONE LANDSCAPE, HEALING and the JOURNEY

### Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya koshas

Witnessing emotion, mind and sensation in Stage 5. brings us into deeper levels of subtly, increasing the ability to visualize and also experience with all of the senses using the vijnanamaya and anandamaya kosha sheaths.

Witness consciousness is a central quality of vijnanamaya kosha, and in this stage, we develop the skills in order to observe not only our thoughts and emotions but also the unconscious mind. The main activity in Stage 6. is to present images related to the unconscious mind. We witness the unconscious and at the same time recognize that *the one who* is witnessing is more whole than the contents of all of the levels of the mind.

The *unconscious* represents the sum total of conditioning of the human species, from the birth of the universe to the present day. This includes the five elements, seasons, cycles, human evolution and civilizations, spiritual practice of all major religions (like meditation or contemplation, ritual and sacrifice), family, death and cycles of life, and nature. Our unconscious works in present tense and in the language of symbolic representation. Dreams come from the unconscious and therefore each part of your dream and dream image is a symbol. This is a different type of language than the every-day conscious mind can easily understand.

When guiding this stage, we can remind students regularly in yoga nidra to notice themselves from the perspective of the Witness. We are feeling and experiencing as *well as* observing. We understand that we are witness to everything that arises in from deeper levels of the mind. This can be done by inviting leading the journey that they see themselves form above or behind going through the journey: "And now you notice yourself there in the forest". As guides, we both present symbols during practice and also guide students to find their own personal symbols.

It is important to remember that each person will experience the guided imagery uniquely. The same person may have very different experiences each time a specific image or journey each time they are visited. Past conditioning, memory, perception, the day, what is currently happening in a person's life can affect what is experienced. Guided imagery is meant to bring one into their deeper layers and these individual differences and perceptions are encouraged. This process may glean light deeper issues, and may reveal the perfect antidote or healing symbol. It is here that our conscious mind is able to experience and observe our deeper sub and unconscious levels of mind. This creates internal connection between all of our parts so that we feel whole.

In the VARK system of learning styles, it is said that we both perceive the world around us and learn new things with unconscious preference for either visual, auditory, linguistic reading/writing or kinesthetic sensing. Thus, if we use all of the senses, especially including visual, sound, words, emotions and feelings, and physical movement, more of our students will be able to engage with what we are guiding in yoga nidra making it inclusive rather than

exclusive and also invoking a rich experience no matter which faculties are a person's dominant ones.

Creating a practice with a variety of visuals, sounds, and feelings will help everyone to have a deep experience and also help them to grow in new ways to expand one's range of capacity of awareness. This will deepen the experience and cultivate awareness in ways that can enrich a persons' life because it opens them up to living more fully.

## **Anandamaya Kosha Bliss Body**

Bliss can be lead and practiced, and is also a gift and the fruit of deep meditation that may come at any time during Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. This is the natural state of health, balance, happiness and knowing our wholeness. We have philosophical and experiential knowledge of our indwelling divine essence, which is the source and meaning of human existence and evolution. It is here that we are free from internal conflict and therefore from stress and its negative effects on physical, emotional and spiritual health.

## **Beyond Koshas Self, Atman**

True Self has no center nor periphery and is simultaneously everywhere, internal and external. This is also unity consciousness. It is here that we understand ourselves as spiritual beings that are the multi-faceted whole.

## **How to Guide Deeper Levels**

Vijnanamaya Kosha

- 'Witness' and observe yourself walking through the journey.
- Begin to witness unconscious mind.
- Guide 'Awareness' of Witness.

Anandamaya Kosha

- Lead feeling bliss arising within being.
- Bliss can arise spontaneously.
- Free of internal conflict gains access to Bliss.

Beyond Koshas

- Lead Unity Consciousness ~ connection with all that is
- Feel body/ self/ being without periphery or center
- Simultaneously everywhere ~ drop in the ocean
- Fruit of the practice is an experience of true Self
- Self as spiritual being that is the multi-faceted whole.

### **Directives to Use:**

- **Imagine, Notice, Become aware of**
- **Hear**
- **Feel, Touch, Sense**
- **See (use sparingly as not all people are visual)**

## IMAGES, ONE LANDSCAPE, HEALING and the JOURNEY - Overview

*Images* refer to individual solitary objects/scenes/landscapes. The simplicity of images can powerfully assist our ability to imagine and to experience with all of the senses making it a good first step before moving into the more complex *One Landscape, Healing and Journey* stages. *One Landscape* is a more in-depth description of an area or place usually in nature. *Healing* happens in the energy body and physical body. *The Journey* represents the deepest part of ourselves and is always the journey to the Self. It is a guided journey from one place to another and back again.

### 1. Images

*Images* refer to individual, solitary objects. The simplicity of images can powerfully assist our ability to imagine and to experience with all of the senses making it a good first step or warm-up before moving into the more intricate **One Landscape, Healing and the Journey**. 'Images' are listed here in categories of symbolic representation. Add your own images to the lists here, and feel free to create your own categories.

Create your own ongoing lists nature, drawing on direct experiences, dreams, and images that come to you in your own practice in this way cultivating observations of nature, also from your sub and unconscious processes. When leading in practice, you may like to evoke only a few images, or an unlimited number. You may state each image once, or to help students get deeper and clearer impressions, repeat each one three times. Often students will experience greater detail and sensory experience than they have had in real life experiences.

### Images Scripts and Practices:

"Use all of your senses to imagine these things as they are named. Hear, feel, smell, see, using any of your senses to experience each one fully. There is no need to try. Let them come to you..." (choose from lists below from 3-12 items, stating each three times).

### Five Elements:

#### EARTH

Old white pine tree  
Desert  
Sand dunes  
Moon's craters  
Green rolling hills  
Snow capped mountain  
Red maple tree  
Stone wall

#### WATER

Babbling brook  
Still pond  
Ocean waves  
Moon Waves on a sandy beach  
River flowing  
Deer drinking at the river  
Torrential rain  
Dewdrops on a green leaf

**FIRE**

Bonfire  
Flame of a candle  
Sunrise over the ocean  
Sunset behind painted clouds  
Radiant Sun  
Fireworks  
Sun reflecting on lake  
Beams of sunlight through trees

**AIR**

Wind blowing through a tall tree  
Flute music in a forest  
Canada geese flying  
White billowing cloud

Silk scarf blowing in the wind (color)  
Sound of crickets at night  
Flowers blowing in the breeze  
Wind chimes

**SPACE/ ETHER**

Stars twinkling in the night sky  
Dark new moon  
Northern lights aurora borealis  
Crescent moon  
Dark night sky  
Twilight  
Expansive Blue Sky  
The Moon

**MANDALAS/ WHOLENESS**

Bouncing ball  
Four leaf clover  
Spider web  
Perfect circle of a flower  
Sun

**CIVILIZATIONS/ EVOLUTION**

Egyptian pyramids  
Ship sailing on the sea  
Circle of trusted friends  
Ancient jungle village  
Ancient village  
Native American circle of tipis  
Totem crest pole  
Native rowers in a dugout cedar canoe  
Airplane

**SAGES/ MEDITATION/ INWARD**

Buddha in meditation  
Wise old man/woman  
Smiling Buddha  
Mandala  
Yantra  
AUM symbol

## CHAKRAS

Can be: herbs/colors/smells/symbols

### 1st Root chakra

Red apple  
Red square  
4 petalled red lotus flower  
Lam (bija mantra)  
Earth element

6-pointed star  
Yam (bija mantra)  
Air element  
Rose, lavender

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Navel chakra

Sunset  
Water flowing  
6 petalled orange lotus flower  
Crescent moon  
Vam (bija mantra)  
Water element

### 5<sup>th</sup> Throat Chakra

sky blue  
16-petalled lotus flower  
Full moon  
Ham (bija mantra)  
Space element  
Frankincense, sage, pine

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Solar Plexus chakra

Sun at midday  
Rays of the sun  
Golden sunlight  
10 petalled saffron lotus- flower  
Ram (bija mantra)  
Fire element

### 6<sup>th</sup> Third Eye Chakra

Violet  
2-petalled lotus flower  
Eye  
Om (bija mantra)  
Jasmine, violet scent

### 4th Heart chakra

emerald green jungle  
12 petalled Green lotus flower

### 7<sup>th</sup> Crown Chakra

Crystal light  
1000 petalled lotus flower  
Lotus scent  
Ocean unity  
White daisy  
Drop of water uniting with ocean

## 2. One Landscape

One Landscape is an in-depth description of one place or an environment such as a forest or beach. One Landscape is ONE place – just like it sounds. You do not travel, but stay in one spot.

### Ocean Landscape Script:

“And now you are at the ocean... Walking at the ocean... You can feel your legs and feet and you feel present in your body walking... You can hear the waves washing onto the shore... You notice the rhythmic waves... You observe the sunlight on the water... The line where the ocean and the sky meets is crisp and clear - the calming horizon... The sky is open, bright blue, and you feel the expansiveness of the sky... You see yourself from above, or from behind, and you are walking on the shoreline, in all this beauty of nature...”

And now you feel like resting, and so you may choose to sit, or to lie down in the sand... Noticing all the places your body touches the warm sand beneath you... And you sink in even deeper... More relaxed... Feeling peaceful and at ease... Feeling like you have merged with nature, with the beauty here at the ocean...”

## 3. Healing

Healing is Inner Healing within the energetic subtle body. *Nyasa* (referring to placing colors, symbols, and sounds in the body) and *Pranavidya* (energy awareness or inner healing) are described here.

### NYASA Healing

*Nyasa* is the tantric practice that the body scan in yoga evolved from. It means ‘to place’ and refers to a seated practice using specific mantras (Sanskrit sounds, words or letters), which were placed or felt in precise parts of the body, such as marma energy points, or chakra wheels of energy. First the name of the body part was remembered, then the place in the body visualized, and finally the mantra was placed there as remembered sound, letter or symbol. We can use this same method in our practice without needing to have a background in Sanskrit by using images, symbols, and by learning bija sounds.

### Symbols

It is very potent to imagine images or symbols in the body. Specific symbols such as the full moon, tree with roots, butterfly, yin yang symbol, and the symbol for *AUM* if the students know it. You may also like to guide students to discover a symbol during practice.

*Mandala*, meaning ‘sacred circle’, is a powerful symbol of wholeness. Anything from nature that is circular is a Mandala, such as a flower, the moon, the sun, a golden egg, planet earth, a star, and so on. Be creative and look around you especially in nature to discover symbols and images for practice. Keep in mind the element the symbol represents and is balancing. For

example, in the heat of summer, it is appropriate to use the symbol of the moon for its cool feminine nature to balance the fire element which is strong at that time of year.

### Sound

To create multi-dimensions and use the sense of hearing we can guide sound coming from the symbol. Sounds can be the *bija* seed sounds of the chakras (look at Chakra chart), the sound of AUM, a particular sound the student is working with, or simply a humming sound. This can create a powerful, deeply balancing and healing vibration throughout the energy body and all levels.

### Placement

Any place in the body can be used for placement of Nyasa. The best places, however, are those that are already potent with energy such as marma points, sense organs, joints and chakras. Generally, the marma points are in each joint and half-way between two joints on the limbs (look at the Marma Map for reference).

### PRANAVIDYA Healing

*Pranavidya* means 'knowledge of prana'. When we focus on prana in various places in our body then envision specific changes or movements of that prana we are affecting a deep root of healing change in our being. For example:

- Feel a place in the body that is tight
- Then feel a place that is relaxed
- Notice the color and feeling of the relaxed place
- Notice the color and feeling of the tight place
- Then bring the relaxed color and feeling into the tight place.

Give it time to be felt a few times. Notice the shifts. You can also use breath awareness to bring symbols, colors, and sounds alive.

### Nyasa Healing: Scripts and Practices

- A. **Aum Practice:** *Students must be familiar with the symbol of 'Aum' for this practice if you use the symbol but you can also use a sun or moon or other symbol or only sound. Visualize the symbol of Aum or other, in gold (warming and energizing) or silver (cooling or sedating), or another color. Imagine the sound of Aum and place symbol, color and sound in each part of the body similar to a body scan. When this is complete, hear all of the Aum's in the body radiating the color and sounding Aum simultaneously. This can also be practiced with other healing sounds or a sound that the student chooses.*

- B. Moon Marma Points Nyasa (effect is cooling and calming) Script:** *Other symbols can be used to evoke specific energy, chakra, or element: sun, various flowers, star, Celtic knot, cloud, drop of water, and so. Various bija seed sounds, or other sounds like 'Aum', or sounds from specific traditions your students practice can be used instead of 'Vam' – which is the bija seed sound for both the navel Swadhistana Chakra, and the Water Element.*

"Going inward now... go inward... Imagine the full moon... Crystal clear moon... The healing moon... Now imagine the moon and its healing energy - or another image or object of your choosing - in the key points in your body. Beginning with the crown: Imagine the full moon at the crown of your head... Moons on your temples... And feel moons on your jaws... Moon on the back of your head... And notice the healing vibration of the moon soothing, calming and cooling absorbing into these places into you...

Imagine moons under your collarbones... Moons in your shoulder joints... biceps... elbows... forearms... wrists... and moons in the centers of your palms... The moons radiate silver, calming energy, that spreads through your hands, and arms from these points...

Moons on your shoulder blades... a moon between the shoulder blades... Moon on your low back... and one on your belly... Moons in your hip joints... thighs... knees... shins... ankles... and soles of your feet... Feel the moon energy balancing and healing you... Feel the moon in your heart center...

And now the sound 'Vam' arises from within the moons in synchronicity, bathing you with healing energy... Sounding like: 'Vaaaaammmmm'... Each time you exhale, the sound of Vam flows through you... Healing and balancing you at all levels of being... And you rest here for some time, receiving all the healing energy you need right now..." **(give 20 seconds or more of silence).**

## Pranavidya Healing: Scripts

**A. Pouring Prana Script:**

"Search for the most open, relaxed, spacious place in your body... Fully feel it... And now feel or ascribe a color to this place... Let that color and feeling pour through the rest of your body... Through your limbs... arms... legs... heart... chest... Notice your color of openness flowing now through your head... thoughts... mind... through all feelings and emotions... Through all levels of being..."

**B. Love Flowing Script:**

“Allow yourself to feel love... Feel it completely and fully... Notice if there’s a place you feel love in your body... Notice the color of love for you – the color of love... And allow the feeling and color of love to spread through your body now... Feel it your heart...”

Color and feeling of love radiating outward from your heart, flowing through your chest... Feel it like perhaps like a liquid flowing into shoulders... arms... hands... fingers... Feel your arms opening and softening, relaxing as love pouring through... The color and feeling of love... feel it washing from your heart, downward flowing through your torso... legs... feet... Your whole body filled with the color and feeling of love... filling you and surrounding you...”

**C. Pranavidya Breath Color Script:**

“Notice the places in the body where the breath fully flows... Notice where breath flows fully... Notice the feeling and the color of breath in this place... Notice its color, or assign it a color... Aware of breath in this place and the color here...”

Now notice the places in your body that feel stuck, tight, difficult to feel... Where does the breath not flow fully?... Come back to the place where breath flows freely, aware of its feeling and color... And allow the color and breath to now flow into the stuck, tight areas... Feel the color spreading to each place that needs more openness and flow...”

## 4. The Journey

The Journey can be one of the most loved and one of the richest parts of a yoga nidra practice. This is where we can weave all five koshas like a tapestry through this part of the script and practice by inviting awareness of the body, breath-energy, thoughts and emotions, a clearer knowing of the inner Witness, and fullness of Bliss! This is also where the guide can get creative. If creativity is not easy for you, not to worry, there are plenty of inspiring sources to draw from for ideas such as: books and scripts on Visualization, your outdoor experiences in nature, and even looking for ‘landscapes’ on google images!

The Journey is the ‘journey to the Self’. The ‘journey’ itself is one of the most dominant and all-pervasive symbols of the collective unconscious. We find the journey in myth, legend, fairy tales, fiction, and ritual of all cultures around the world, and from all eras.

The journey is a key motif in every spiritual tradition. Arjuna and Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita of yoga and Hinduism, or movement through the Four Directions and Medicine Wheel in Native American spirituality, both of which, through trials and tribulations, with the help of guides and symbols, are journeys into Self-knowledge and wholeness.

Each Journey is a healing journey because when we connect to the deepest part of ourselves, this in itself is healing. Patanjali says it is Avidya, lack of Self-knowledge or awareness, which is separation from Self, that is the root of all suffering and illness. Connection with Self is what restores us. The search, the seeking for Self, on its own is healing. The journey represents the deepest part of ourselves and may be conceived and evolved in any number of ways. Following are some guidelines, themes, scripts and practices for you.

### Journey Guidelines

- A. Create the journey with Beginning, Middle, End.
- B. Orient with a mode of travel (fly, walk, sail, float...).
- C. Include a way to get to each new place or dimension with a Threshold by physically moving your body over, under or through the threshold: bridge, across a stream, gate, arch, over or under a fence, through a hole or tunnel or well.
- D. Describe details of the journey, environment, symbols and so on. This can be with the teacher's direction, or given space for the students' imagination to fill in the details.
- E. Directive words can be used to deepen the Journey: climb, descend, move downward, go underneath, inside, move into dark or light; transformation: like from seed to flower or tree.
- F. Guide into the deeper layers of being by systematically through the koshas, chakras, or elements.
- G. Journeys in nature are powerful and balancing and help to connect us to the five elements both internal and external.
- H. Heart's Intention Sankalpa, may be repeated here in the journey, so that it sinks deep in and may continue to be associated within a larger symbolic context.
- I. Students can be guided to focus energy on places in their being that call for healing (pranavidya). It is potent to have an experience of one's own healing

## Journey Practices

Following are some ideas for you to create your own scripts:

**A. Bridge to New Season Practice:**

*Near the change of season, guide a walk from the current season into the following. For example, take a walk from winter snow and cold, into spring flowers and warmth, adding all the sounds, smells and so on of both seasons. This assists in transitioning into what comes next and integrating the seasonal/elemental changes within.*

**B. Healing, Wholeness, and Bliss Practice:**

*Journey to your ideal state or place of healing and wholeness. Arrive at this place, notice and feel all the details. Receive healing or guidance, from inside or from an external guide that you meet there. Eventually, you feel complete and whole. The bliss that has always been here within now fills you. You feel yourself as pure bliss, radiant and spacious, connected with all that is. You are complete within yourself and connected to the world around you. You return transformed.*

**C. Symbol Practice:**

*On your journey into nature, with full description of the details (meadow, field, forest, ocean, mountaintop and so on) you look closely at something here (tree, flower, leaf, pinecone, seashell, cloud and so on). Within this living object, you find a color. This color transforms into a symbol. You see the symbol clearly with all of its details. You carry this symbol with you as a reflection of your life journey at this moment in time as you return.*

**D. Journey to a Symbol Practice and Script:**

*You journey to a sacred place. Here, in a: tree, root, cloud, water, or other – you notice a color. This color begins to have form and shape and becomes an object or symbol that heals and restores you. You return feeling connected and rejuvenated.*

**E. Island Paradise Practice:**

*Float on a cloud over sea to perfect island paradise. Explore your island paradise with all of its details. Perhaps resting in a hammock, climbing a tree, drinking from a coconut. You return relaxed and refreshed, filled with joy.*

**F. Witness Practice:**

*Lead students into noticing themselves as the 'witness'. Then step back even further into being 'aware' of their witness. Experiencing the level of 'awareness' that surrounds the witness.*

**G. Bliss Practice and Script:**

*At the end of any journey to assist listeners to feel Bliss, first bring students into an experience of Ether-Space element such as expanding outward into blue sky. It is easier to feel Bliss when we first feel the corresponding element Ether-Space. Then guide 'bliss arising within that has always been present filling and surrounding you'.*

## STAGE 7. REPEAT HEART'S INTENTION: All Koshas

The Sankalpa Heart's Intention, created in Stage 2, is now repeated here three times. After bringing awareness to all of the koshas and beyond, an extremely receptive state can be reached. You may like to invite students to repeat it three times once or even more times (e.g. in the journey, after the journey, and in seated position with a mudra). The Sankalpa seed is now planted deep into the soil of all levels of being, and in this nourishing ground, it flourishes and blossoms into radiance.

In Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra you have a choice of places that Stage 7 Repeat Sankalpa can happen. It can be repeated in two or more places:

- Within Stage 6:
  - Can be the pinnacle of the Journey.
  - Within Healing in the Journey.
- After Stage 6. or after the Journey is completed.
- After you bring students back through the koshas (Stage 8) and up to sitting as a way to complete the entire Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra practice (you know they will be awake and alert here!).

### Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention: Scripts and Practices

#### A. Heart's Wish True

"Remember now your Heart's wish statement, the positive intention you set at the beginning. State it silently now three times as the truth..." (give 20-seconds or more of silence).

#### B. Heart's Intention Already True

"Recall your heart's intention positive statement. Repeat it now three times as though it is already happening. It is already the truth..." (give 20-seconds or more of silence).

#### C. Heart's Longing Shift

"Recall your heart's longing intention and repeat it silently three times... If your heart's statement has changed in any way, let that happen... Allow colors, images, symbols, landscapes to arise with your statement should that happen..." (give 20-seconds or more of silence).

## STAGE 8. RETURN: All Koshas (return from Journey and return from Koshas)

This is the return backward through Stage 6. Journey and refers to two separate things:

- A) Take students backward through the landscapes of the journey to where you began in this room.
- B) AND Take the students backward through each kosha and stage, to return to the physical body annamaya kosha. This allows students to gradually come back into waking consciousness and embodiment. Travelling backwards through the Koshas in this order:
  1. Bliss
  2. Witness
  3. Thoughts-Feelings-Emotions
  4. Breath-Energy
  5. Physical body

Do not forget or skip the RETURN! This will help to ensure the students fully come back into the present moment, and into a grounded experience of the body and creates safety as they leave the yoga nidra space and enter back into the world again.

### Stage 8. Return: Scripts and Practices

- A. **The Journey in reverse brings students back to where they began from and can be quite brief. For example:**

“Go back now, floating back through the clouds... climbing back into the tree... and you see yourself moving down the trunk... and landing on the earth... And you walk back, and you see yourself walking back now into the room you began in... Resting here, being guided in yoga nidra...” (Then take them backward through the Koshas - add another script).

- B. **Ocean Landscape Return Script: (only use this if you led an ocean landscape; or change it to make it match the landscape you did lead). IMPORTANT: You need to also add your return through the koshas backward to the physical body – i.e. add B or C after this script.**

“And your healing energy continues to wash through you... Your Heart’s intention continues to unfold within you, even as you journey back now. You rise up on the beach and walk back, retracing your footprints in the sand... And you see yourself returning now... You come all the way back to this room, here in this room you began in. Slowly returning...” (Then take them backward through the Koshas -add another script).

- C. **Counting Back Through the Koshas Script: (numbers can be spoken out loud with the script if you choose as numbers help students feel the progression and it will allow them to come back more smoothly).**

“5 – Feel expansive, open and free... Radiating pure bliss and light... Aware of your innate healing energy...

4 – Now become aware of yourself as your Witness... The one who has observed with love and acceptance your body, breath, journey...

3 – And now begin to notice thoughts and feelings flowing through your awareness again...

2 – Notice your breath... Feel its rhythm and pace... Invite your breath to deepen now... Feel yourself gradually reawakening...

1 – Now sense your body... Notice your back on the ground... Feel all the places where you touch the ground... Feel your front body facing skyward... You are now completing yoga nidra practice, becoming slowly more awake and aware...

As you're ready begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... Begin to wiggle your toes... Gently rock your head side to side, a slow awakening... Draw a deeper breath into your belly, into your chest... Rock slowly over to your left side if that is comfortable.

Press your hands into the floor, and come up to a comfortable seated position... Lengthen your spine... Take a full breath in and out... Notice how you feel – aware of the effects of practice today. [Aum] Peace, Peace, eternal Peace. Slowly allow the eyes to slowly open to a soft gaze."

#### **D. Clear Light Return**

"Become aware now of your body's healing energy. Inherent joy... And now become aware of the part of you that has been Witnessing – observing yourself in the journey, breath and body... Notice yourself as the Witness.

Begin to feel thoughts and feelings arising within you... Become aware of your breath, breath flowing through you with ease and peace... And now begin to deepen your breath... Breathe through your entire body... Notice your back-body, side of the body facing the ground... Feel all the places where you touch the ground...

We are now completing practice. Begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... Notice your toes and begin to wiggle your toes... Gently rock your head side to side, a slow awakening...

Draw a deeper breath into your belly, into your chest... Rock slowly over to your left side if that is comfortable for you. Take more breaths... Press your hands into the floor, and slowly flow up to a comfortable seated position... Lengthen your spine... Take a full breath in and as you exhale imagine filling with clear light... Let your hands rise up to your face... Simply notice how you feel right now... Notice the effects of practice.

[Aum] Peace, Peace, eternal Peace. May there be peace, eternal Peace in your heart. Ever so slowly now allow the eyes to slowly open to a soft gaze on the floor."

## Chapter 4. Practices BEFORE and AFTER Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra



### PART 1. BEFORE Yoga Nidra

#### Environment

Creating a comfortable and secure environment will go a long way in assisting students to drop into meditation more quickly, deeply and easily. Close the door and windows to block out any sound disturbances. Remind folks to turn cell phones off – even ‘vibrate’ mode can be disruptive. Dimming the lights during the day is relaxing. At night when it is dark, experiment with only slightly dimmed lights since people will naturally fall asleep more easily at that hour. Keep the lights on to keep them more alert.

Choose a room if possible with carpeted floor without drafts. Make sure the room will be warm and comfortable. If it is too cool it will be more difficult to relax the body. You may want to suggest that people wear sweaters or warmer clothing. The body drops a few degrees when we are relaxed and when we lie down so there is actually more of a chance of feeling cold in savasana lying down pose.

Noise distractions may occur and you may choose to do nothing, as people are being guided to come back into the moment with each new directive you give. Or you can incorporate the sound into your guidance “let the sounds that you hear bring you deeper into your own body”, or “if your mind wanders, bring it back again and again to the sound of my voice.” Often sounds during yoga nidra will keep people more alert and attentive and as long as they are not struggling internally with it. Your response to it will affect them. Focus your energy back inward.

Distractions are everywhere from inside of us- thoughts, feelings, sensations- and outside of us- sounds and other people and are not a problem, but a challenge that can help us develop and strengthen our ability to focus, and to respond skillfully, rather than in ‘reaction’.

## Precautions, Permission and Suitability

Give participants permission repeatedly to do only what feels good and comfortable for them at each moment and stage allowing them to make CHOICES. Let students know that they can change your words, images or experiences to make it work or feel better for them.

Establishing their 'soothing place' by simply guiding it in Stage 2 is a potent and helpful tool that can be developed in the beginning of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Then it will be easy to remember and come back to it should the student feel uncomfortable in any kosha throughout any of the stages. Letting students know that this is their comforting, soothing, peaceful place that they can return to for any reason or for no reason at all, gives them permission and choice.

At any time during the meditation, students can take a rest from the process by opening the eyes, moving the body, or sitting up. Emphasize that the student is in control of the journey, you as the guide are merely offering invitations that they can accept or go a different route. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a process of co-creation between your words and where they want to journey.

### How to Modify for Appropriateness

All Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra may not appropriate for everybody. Generally, for those who have a history of mental illness or are on medication for mental illness, Stages 1. Entry, 2. Sankalpa and soothing place, and 3. Body Scan are generally appropriate for everyone, and can be led as a complete practice on its own. Remember that not all stages are needed for a deep and healing experience.

It is not a good idea to take some people into Stages 4-8, unless you are a trained therapist. Students can respond in a variety of ways that may be beyond the scope of your training. Stages 5. and 6. can be potent and elicit deep experiences, and it is up to you to be responsible and ethical with your students and clients.

## Context What You Lead

Verbally tell them what you will do and why – this gives a context. Tell them what you will lead, lead it, tell them what you did. This gives a complete picture, providing reasoning and understanding for your session which helps to ground your time together. You may also like to tell them what images or symbols you will be using, and you may want to inquire if they will make anyone uncomfortable. You may need to adjust your plan -- be prepared with alternative images. Remind students that if they become uncomfortable at any time during yoga nidra they can recall their soothing place, or open their eyes, or move the body, can help one feel more in control and grounded.

## Practices Before Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

1. Movement
2. Mudra
3. Pranayama
4. Guided Self-Massage
5. Aromatherapy

Guiding simple practices before yoga nidra offers a good transition from the busyness of life into the depths of turning inward in this meditation. Feeling calm, relaxed and centered goes a long way to being able to focus to reach deeper layers of being.

### 1. Movement

Yoga postures and breathing, Tai Chi, Chi Gong, stretching, and progressive relaxation (tensing and releasing muscle groups) are some good ways to address the physical body and bring our state into the creative right brain, enhancing our ability to concentrate and vision mental images. This time helps the students to see and know you with their eyes open which can help them to feel more trusting during the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra experience.

Most people lead lives with too little movement, working sedentary jobs or jobs that require repetitive movement that may injure. Gentle guided movement is usually always welcomed and can reduce anxiety and restlessness. If you are not a yoga teacher, have no fear, guide your students in what you like to do gently and simply. Ask them to tune into what their body needs, giving them permission to follow the wisdom of their own bodies. Physical movement assists people in getting in touch with themselves and their body in this moment, which helps them transition into Divine Sleep®.

### 2. Mudra

Mudra means 'gesture' or 'seal' and 'to bring bliss'. Mudras are gestures for the hands or body that attune us to specific energetic frequencies; they "lock in" a particular energy experience. Mudras can be found in most religions and spiritual traditions. For example, Jesus is often depicted using specific mudras. Mudras have been part of Vedic culture in India from the earliest recorded time. The development of mudras in Asia differs from other traditions because the scientific precision of mudras was understood thus they were elaborated on and developed.

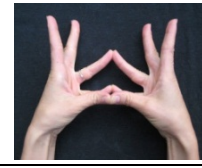
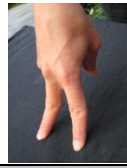
Vedic culture and religion in India has utilized mudras from earliest recorded time. Religious ceremonies included hand gestures with mantra chanting as described in the Vedas 5000 years ago. Brahmin priests used gesture and mantra to channel and balance the energies of the elements in their subjects. Today in Vedic rituals, they continue to use mudra in ceremony. The science of mudra was fully developed in the Tantric period, which reached its height about 1000 years ago. The most common mudras are performed with the hands although others, less

commonly practiced, use the head, eyes, and others the entire body. Some yoga asana are considered to be mudras.

Mudras are vehicles and portals for connecting to the energies of the gods and goddesses and the five elements at a deep level. The deities are the embodiment of various energies in the universe. They are the personification of the qualities and potentials of the universe and of our inner universe. The hands act like antennas to direct and channel the energies of the universe into our being where the body becomes a receiver for all the various aspects of universal energy. Our bodies become a microcosm of that aspect of the universe, which each mudra evokes.

Because we feel these universal energies in mudra practice, it opens a doorway to feel and integrate universal energies in our other practices of asana, meditation, and daily living. Mudras connect us with sacred realms of the universe and we should therefore create sacred space for their practice. However, mudras are practical and can be done almost anywhere. They can be anchored into a yoga practice and then repeated throughout the day, which is especially helpful for someone trying to heal or attain a new perspective. 5-10 breaths is a good length to hold a mudra to begin with and can over time be extended to greater periods.

KOSHA MUDRAS



Adhi	Bhu	Prithivi	Abhaya Varada	Mira
<i>Primordial</i>	<i>Becoming, arising.</i>	<i>Earth</i>	<i>Fearless</i>	<i>Ocean</i>
<i>"I am always calm in the center of my being"</i>	<i>"My roots run deep into the core of the living earth."</i>	<i>"My body brings me home into the present moment."</i>	<i>"I move forward without fear, in complete safety."</i>	<i>"I awaken to the pulse of life within and around me."</i>
Calms and relaxes nervous system. Assists full breathing esp. in abdomen and back of body.	Grounds and roots one into the earth. Opens pelvic floor with breath and prana.	Reduces stress and balances energy centers in abdomen. Good for skeletal system and elimination.	Calms feelings in navel, opens trusting heart. Note: Right hand up, Left at navel.	Brings breath and prana into lower abdomen and pelvis.
Good for high blood pressure, anxiety, fear, insecurity.	Brings a sense of weight into frenetic energy. Good for travelers.	Good for musculo-skeletal problems like osteoporosis and osteoarthritis, stress, constipation.	Good for dispelling feelings of insecurity or fear.	Good for SI and other joints, constipation, menstrual cramps, prostrate problems.
Caution: low blood pressure and recent abdominal surgery	No Cautions.	No Cautions.	No Cautions.	Caution for pregnancy.
Calming and sedating.	Trust, grounding, finding our roots.	Finding security and trust. Centering and helps one discern.	Security and self reliance.	Emotional digestion, calming, grounding.
<b>Annamaya Kosha</b>				<b>Pranamaya Kosha</b>

*Hold for 5-10 natural breaths stating affirmations aloud and silently.*

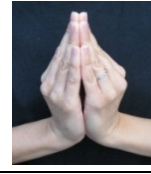
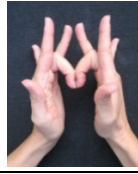
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Chapter 4. Practices BEFORE and AFTER Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

					
<b>Hakini</b>	<b>Jala</b>	<b>Trimurti</b>	<b>Vajrapradama</b>	<b>Purnahridaya</b>	<b>Shiva Linga</b>
<i>Hasta mudra</i>	<i>Water or Liquid and Flowing</i>	<i>Creation, sustenance and transformation.</i>	<i>Unshakable confidence</i>	<i>Open Heart</i>	<i>Sacred Creative Force</i>
<b><i>"Energy and breath flow through me in balance &amp; abundance."</i></b>	<b><i>"I flow with my inner rhythms more and more each day."</i></b>	<b><i>"I am perfectly balanced in body, mind and spirit."</i></b>	<b><i>"I trust in myself and in the loving heart of the universe."</i></b>	<b><i>"As I welcome in all thoughts and feelings, I rest in greater peace."</i></b>	<b><i>"I embrace and unfold my true life purpose." "My light shines into the world."</i></b>
Directs breath and energy into entire body. Opens entire body.	Good for all fluid systems of the body: circulatory, urinary, lymphatic. Liquid Aliveness.	Good for all conditions of the female reproductive system.	Good for fear, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, trauma, and loss.	Directs breath and awareness to chest and releases tension, increasing respiration. Instills compassion and self-acceptance.	Energizes and centers entire being. Gives a sense of trust, confidence, personal power and being immovable in the face of obstacles
Good for overall health and level of energy.	Good for overall digestion, kidney and urinary problems.	Good for menopause, fertility, menstrual issues.	Opens and massages heart.	Good for creating openness to perceive true Self in waves of emotion & personality.	Lethargy, lack of enthusiasm, ADD.
Begin slowly with all health conditions.	Cautions: none	Cautions: Pregnancy	Emotions may arise.	No cautions.	Cautions: none
Opens the emotions and engages the witness.	Uplifting, energizing and expanding.	Soothing, grounding, acceptance.	Confidence, security, interconnection	Welcoming feelings.	Vast field of Self. Balances personal power. Witness.
<b>Pranamaya Kosha</b>			<b>Manomaya Kosha</b>		

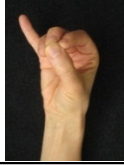
Hold for 5-10 natural breaths stating affirmations aloud and silently.

Modified from Joseph LePage and used with permission.



Citta	Pushpanjali	Dirgha Swara	Padma	Kapota Mudra
Witness Consciousness	Offering of Flowers	Opening breath	Lotus Flower	Dove
<b>"Awakening the Witness reveals my true Self."</b>	<b>"I receive each moment of life as a gift and blessing."</b>	<b>"I release the weight of the past to receive the gift of the present."</b>	<b>"My heart blossoms open in the warmth of living."</b>	<b>"I flow in the sea of tranquility in the center of my heart."</b>
Improves mental clarity and releases limiting beliefs with the ability to witness. Creates space between the thoughts to open to witness consciousness.	Creates compassion, generosity, openness and openhandedness.	Increases breath capacity throughout entire lungs. Releases blame, resentment, guilt.	Opens and reveals our wholeness. Brings heart energy upward into higher chakras	Heart opening and facilitates heart filling with Holy Spirit.
Releases tension in shoulders and neck.	Good for opening to receive and for heart, circulatory and immune systems.	Good for asthma and other respiratory conditions.	Heals the heart and all its emotional wounds.	Good for depression, memory loss, scoliosis, eyes, ears, and throat.
No Cautions	Cautions: none	Cautions: none	Cautions: none	Cautions: none
Awakening the Witness.	Love and compassion. Receiving, connecting.	Opening , balancing, discriminating.	Integration, clearing, union.	Expansion of compassion, holy spirit of the heart.
<b>Vijnanamaya Kosha</b>				

Hold for 5-10 natural breaths stating affirmations aloud and silently.  
Modified from Joseph LePage and used with permission.



Hansi	Garuda	Akasha	Dharma Pravartana	Mandala
<i>The Smiling One</i>	<i>King of birds</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Wheel of Dharma</i>	<i>Circle of Wholeness</i>
<i>"My inner smile awakens the bliss that is always present."</i>	<i>"Freedom is my True Nature"</i> <i>"I fly with infinite possibility."</i>	<i>"I release limitation and open to infinite possibility."</i>	<i>"I rest in perfect harmony as all five elements are balanced within me."</i>	<i>"I am whole and complete exactly as I am."</i>
Brings breath and energy up to chest, neck, thyroid, head. Enhances positive mood and supports healthy immunity.	Freedom. Unlimited boundaries. Opens back of the heart.	Releases muscular tension in the neck, shoulders, jaw. Activates space element to enhance connection with our inner spaciousness and possibility.	Balance of body, mind and spirit are created by integration of all five elements. Encourages full yogic breath. Creates ideal balance between rest and activity.	Experience of Wholeness. Meditative effect.
Good for depression. Releases jaw tension. Nourishes nervous system.	Good for feelings of constriction in life. Balance sides of body & organs.	Good for hypothyroid and hearing problems. Enhances intuition.	Balances all systems of the body and all five elements.	Good for all psychological and emotional problems.
No cautions.	High blood pressure practice with caution.	Caution: Headaches, dizziness, light-headedness monitor effects.	No Cautions.	Cautions: none
Joy, peace, bliss, and unity.	Spread your wings and fly. Openness.	Spaciousness.	Equilibrium.	Balance, clarity, union.
<b>Anandamaya Kosha</b>			<b>Balance Mudras</b>	

Hold for 5-10 natural breaths stating affirmations aloud and silently.

Modified from Joseph LePage and used with permission.

### 3. Pranayama -- Breath work

Various pranayama – breath work techniques, or simply guided deep belly breathing, is calming and helpful in assisting transitioning from the active day into a more receptive and meditative state for Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Breathing can be guided from a seated position or lying down. Specific pranayama which can benefit students before Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra are:

- **Dirgha** – Three-part breath: deep breathing into all three areas of the torso.
- **Ujjayi** -- Ocean or Victorious breath: calming, soothing, warming, increases mind focus.
- **Nadi Shodhana** -- Alternate nostril sweet breath: balances active *pingala* and receptive *ida* aspects of one's energy of being thus bringing students to open from the active mode into a more calm and meditative state.
- **Kaki** – Crow Mudra Breath: Exhale through the 'beak' of the pursed lips.

*Pranayama* is a Sanskrit word derived from three root words. *Prana* is the vital life force that is inherent in every living thing, nature, and the elements. *Yama* means to expand. *Ayama* means to restrain, control or channel. *Pranayama* thus refers to the channeling and expanding of life force and refers to yogic breathing practices. *Pranayama* is a bridge between the conscious and unconscious which integrates body, mind, and spirit.

The human body is a vehicle of energy. With *pranayama* energy is stored, expanded or supercharged through breath patterns. It has the capacity to enhance all of the physical systems of the body as well as the subtle energy centers, called *chakras*, and energy channels called *nadis*. Working with *pranayama* cultivates healing and transformation on all levels: physical, energetic, emotional, mental and spiritual. Pranayama not only creates more breath awareness in our daily lives, but improves our capacity to breathe fully by strengthening, opening and stretching muscles and connective tissue, creates muscle and neural pathway memory. A regular practice raises our level of prana vital life force which aids in health, well-being and spiritual evolution.

*Pranayama* is best done at least 2 hours after a meal, in a seated position, and with loose comfortable clothing, without a belt, so the abdomen can expand.

#### Posture for Pranayama

Any comfortable seated position where the body is relaxed and the back straight without any strain. Using a cushion helps the lumbar spine retain its natural curve which is desirable for good posture and for assisting the navel and abdomen to be as spacious and relaxed as possible. Elbows close to the waist, then placing the hands onto the thighs, will result in open and relaxed alignment of the shoulders, chest and neck. Chin is parallel to the ground. *Dirgha Pranayama* can also be done laying on the back, preferably with a cushion under the knees for low back comfort.

#### Dirgha Pranayama: 3-Part Breath, Complete Breath, Yogic Breath

Dirgha means to lengthen. It is helpful to place one hand on the abdomen, below belly button, and another on the heart center, at the mid-line of the body, to feel the breath flow through the body. First, breathe a few deep breaths into the navel, as though you were blowing up a

balloon in the belly. Then move to thoracic breathing and breathe into chest/ribs a few breaths. Finally, practice a few full breaths in the collar bones/upper shoulder area.

Now put these three breaths together by first inhaling navel, then ribs, then collar bones. Exhale all of the breath out slowly while gently squeezing navel inward towards the spine to release all breath. Allow the exhalation to be longer than the inhalation. The slower your breath, the more oxygen and prana you will receive, and the more toxins you will release on exhalation.

**Benefits:**

- uses full capacity of the lungs
- removes stale air and toxins
- increases flexibility of chest and lungs
- increases overall energy
- renews each system of the body
- activates relaxation response
- massages digestive organs and thereby improves digestion and elimination
- increases breath capacity not only while practicing, but can permanently increase capacity the more you practice
- helps release chest, shoulder and neck tension
- massages thymus gland thereby strengthening the immune system
- strengthens diaphragm

### Ujjayi Ocean Breath

*Ujjayi* is a technique of controlling the speed and volume of the breath. Contraction of glottis in back of throat gives the ocean sound. It is beneficial to practice *ujjayi* together with *dirgha*, and can be used in yoga postures/asana, because it keeps the breath, mind, and metabolism at a steady level as exertion increases. Seated practice time is between 5-20 minutes. *Ujjayi* can be used throughout the day to keep stress levels and blood pressure down. *Ujjayi* is a good precursor to meditation as it offers a deeply relaxing effect on all levels.

**Benefits:**

- slows down heart rate/metabolism
- deeply relaxing
- strengthens and tones throat
- may reduce snoring
- increases suction of air into lungs
- increases lung capacity
- focuses and calms mind
- strengthens and tones throat
- may reduce snoring
- reduce blood pressure by activating baroreceptors in the back of the throat (helpful in management of heart disease and high blood pressure)

**Contraindications:**

*Ujjayi* may be too sedating for those with low blood pressure; watch for dizziness.

### Nadi Shodhana Alternate Nostril Breathing

*Nadi* means “little rivers” and refers to the energy channels in the body. In this *pranayama* we are affecting mainly *ida* and *pingala nadis* to bring them back into harmony and balance. *Ida* represents the feminine aspect, is the main energy channel on the left side of the spine, and

flows through the left nostril. *Pingala* represents the masculine aspect, is the energy of the right side of the body, and flows through the right nostril. With the right hand we hold *Vishnu mudra* (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers tucked under the fleshy base of the thumb, with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers extended. Use thumb to close right nostril and ring finger to close left nostril).

Instructions: Close right nostril with thumb and exhale all of the air out through the left nostril. Inhale through the left nostril. Close both nostrils. Open right nostril and exhale. Inhale right. Close both and exhale left. Inhale left and so on moving side to side. Exhalation is usually twice as long as inhalation without strain. This is a quiet and soundless breath. Sit up strait with lengthened spine so nadhis are balanced by your posture. Keep elbow slightly out to the side to keep shoulder open. Begin your practice with 3-5 minutes and extend practice time a little longer each week if you practice regularly.

**Benefits:**

- clears and opens sinus passages
- balances nervous system
- metabolic rate reduced
- balances chakras energy centers
- balances emotions
- brings clarity to mind
- balances upward and downward energy currents of the body (*pranavayus*)
- regulates/balances blood pressure and heart rate

**Indications:**

Recommended for everyone.

Beneficial for immune system disorders such as chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia. Can be used for heart disease and high blood pressure if done gently. Helps with fluctuating emotional states and hormonal fluctuations caused by PMS and menopause.

## Kaki: Crow Mudra Breath (variation)

This cooling Earth element breath helps to calm, soothe and ground energy, reducing stress and tension, and lowering or balancing blood pressure. 'Kaki mudra' is practiced by creating an O shape with the mouth. Inhale deeply through the nose, then exhale a longer breath out through the kaki mudra beak of the mouth. A ratio of 1:2 inhalation to exhalation has been proven to lower blood pressure rate. Indicated for warmer climates and seasons rather than cool.

### Benefits:

- Activates parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation response)
- reduces metabolic rate including blood pressure
- relaxing to entire system including muscles and soft tissue
- helpful for allergies, anxiety, hypertension, and other heat conditions
- good for insomnia, fever, and to relieve thirst
- draws on inward

### Contraindications:

- cold or flu; respiratory conditions need to exercise caution
- may not be helpful for those with depression or tendency toward introversion
- may not be helpful for those who feel cool already
- low blood pressure make sure not feeling light headed or too relaxed.

## 4. Self-Massage

Guided self-massage helps students to get comfortable connecting with their physical body. It helps to bring more energy and awareness to increase one's ability to sense and feel the body during the body scan in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. This facilitates deeper connection to Annamayakosha. Self-massage is easy to do, feels great, and has numerous health benefits including lymphatic circulation, unwinding nervous system, relaxation of muscle tension and increased endorphins. A beautiful way to nurture ones' self that calms the 'thinking mind' in order to be able to settle down to be still and go on the inward journey of Divine Sleep®.

Self-massage can be based on the theme of your session. For example, if you are working with Earth element, massaging the feet and legs will mirror the theme. If your theme is on energy flow, massaging the shoulders, chest and belly will be helpful to open up energy. Self-massage can be guided for one specific area of the body like the feet or the face, head, and shoulders, or the entire body.

## Abhyanga Ayurvedic Massage Outline

Practice seated on floor ('x5' means practice five strokes)

- scalp "hair-wash"
- stroke brow bones with thumbs x5
- circle around eye sockets x5
- stroke length of nose x5
- stroke jaw x5
- palm circles on chin x5
- jaw circles x5
- temple circles x5
- full hand stroke on forehead x5
- massage ears- try to unfold all the folds
- squeeze neck
- upper shoulder squeeze
- right hand on left shoulder: circle shoulder joint x3
- right hand strokes up and down upper arm x5
- inner arm strokes x5
- elbow circles x3
- up and down forearm x5
- inner forearm x5
- wrist circles inner and outer x3
- whole hand inner and outer x3
- massage each finger
- other arm: left hand on right arm
- "V" strokes on chest x5
- belly circles up R and down L x5
- up and down rib strokes using opposite hand x5
- hand circles hip joint x5
- up and down top of thigh x5
- outside thigh strokes x5
- inside thigh strokes x5
- bend knee- back of thigh strokes x5
- hand circles knee x3
- shin strokes x5
- outside and inside calf with both hands x5
- back of calf x5
- both hands circle ankles x5
- pick up foot and rub whole foot to warm up
- each individual toes
- between tendons on top of foot
- knuckle arch strokes x5
- knuckle whole foot x5
- Other leg

## 5. Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a wonderful way to assist students in relaxing before or after Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Inquire first to assess whether anyone has allergies to any of the essential oils and how serious a reaction it is. You may simply avoid giving aromatherapy to the students with allergies or may want to forgo that part and leave it for another week in the case of a more serious allergy (rare).

You can put essential oils into a carrier oil or cream and put it on your hands or wrists, or put it onto a tissue. When students have settled into savasana or other postures, go around to each student and hold your hands, wrists or tissue a few inches above their nose for about a minute or so to let them naturally breathe it in. It is a brilliant way to help set the tone you are aiming for and to foster a more personal energetic connection to each student. Recognize that you are doing subtle energy work and be mindful of what you are thinking and what is going through your mind. You may like to recite in your mind a mantra, Loving Kindness meditation, or the student's intention if you are aware of it.

It is important to use high quality oils by a reputable company. It is never good to use anything with chemical scent in it and unfortunately most companies do use chemicals, even ones that we may think of as good that come from the health food store. David Crow is one of the world's most foremost experts of Botanical medicine. He created Floracopeia, which is an excellent company that uses no chemicals and can be found at [www.floracopeia.com](http://www.floracopeia.com).

There are many to try and to love. Here are some basic essential oils and their benefits:

- Lavender: The number one oil for relaxation as it reduces anxiety, enhances sleep, and rejuvenates nervous exhaustion.
- Sandalwood: Enhances meditation, calms the mind, assists in concentration and assists in opening the heart.
- Cedar wood: Earthy, grounding and good for first and second chakras.

## Savasana Corpse Pose

1. Posture and Alignment
2. Props
3. Modifications
4. Hands-On Assists

Offer props and alignment cues for the students to get settled and as comfortable and relaxed as possible. Any position is a good position to practice in, and it is recommended to do Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra in all positions. Sitting, standing, and laying down.

### 1. Posture and Alignment



### Savasana Corpse Posture

Many people confuse the names 'savasana posture' and yoga nidra. Savasana is a posture, not a practice. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is the practice. Here is a script with all the important alignment cues:

“Lie down on a blanket or mat on your back. Place a pillow under knees if you like, feet 2' apart and turned inward pigeon toed (feet dropped out to the sides actually tightens piriformis muscle deep in the buttock/hips), chin tucked gently toward your chest to lengthen the back of your neck, a folded blanket under your head if you like, but not a pillow, which will lift the head and put the neck and spine out of alignment.

Hands are placed out from the hips 1.5' or more, palms turned upward in a posture of receptivity. Snuggle your shoulder blades a little closer together, take a deep breath and release your whole body down into the floor. Sink down into the earth; feel mother earth holding and supporting you as you let go into Savasana posture.”

It is helpful to associate alignment and the physical dense body with Earth element: bones heavy, body heavy, sinking into earth, and growing roots.

## Modifications

If student is uncomfortable, try anything to make them comfortable including various postures like side lying posture or the use of props.



Constructive Rest Posture

Lying down in savasana, knees bent and feet apart. \*Knees touch together like a tent, leaning on each other to hold in place so no muscular activity is necessary, and the psoas releases its tensions.

## 2. Props

- cushions
- rolled up yoga mat
- blankets
- strap
- eye pillow
- pillows
- and other props from around the house or studio...





Eye Pillow or Scarf



Handtowel neck roll: keep it small (the size of a silver dollar or Canadian Loonie)



Cushion for knees and yoga strap for eyes



Rolled up yoga mat for knees

## Seated Postures

In seated postures we want to be careful to be supported while maintaining a straight spine. It is best if we do not need to lean on anything so that we are using our core muscles to stay upright. When we lean, there is a tendency for the low back to round and thus our core muscles actually weaken rather than strengthen. There are many ways to sit for extended periods of time in relative comfort. There should not be a sense of stretch in seated poses, rather a feeling of support. Baddha Konasana is not recommended for this reason (see below).



Sukhasana: cross leg posture.



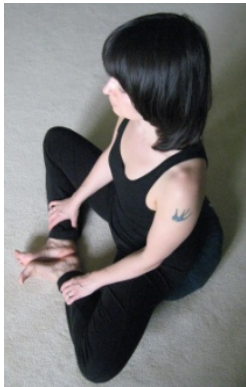
Sukhasana: with knee supports.



Vajrasana thunderbolt pose on two cushions, side by side.



Seated on edge of chair with cushion under feet to keep thigh bones parallel to ground.



Baddha Konasana: Not Recommended for yoga nidra or Meditation as it is stretching you.

## 1. Modifications

### If Hands Do Not Touch The Floor In Savasana

If the backs of the hands do not touch the floor, place a folded blanket or towel or other small cushion under the space of wrist and hand for support.



### Side Lying for Comfort, Pregnancy, Coughing or Snoring

If a student is coughing, it may be helpful to suggest rolling to their side as often cough or tickle in the throat will then dissipate. This is also good for snoring. When you approach them, make gentle sounds with your feet on the floor near their ears so you do not startle them. Do not touch their shoulder, as this can be invasive at this moment when they have their eyes

closed. Go around to their feet and slowly bring your hands down onto the ankles. Then go to their ear and speak with them. Offer them a cushion for under head and between knees and direct them into the side laying pose. At times during cold/flu season I will offer the side laying variation as an option to everyone as we are settling onto the floor mentioning it is good for cough, tickle in throat, and snoring.

### **Snoring**

Yes, what to do about snoring! Sometimes walking around nearby the snorer (continue verbally leading Divine Sleep®), and making gentle sounds with your feet is enough. Gently touching their ankles can help awaken them. Using the Anchor statement can be helpful. Finally if they continue to be disruptive to everyone else, ask them to roll to their side, offering cushions for under head and between knees.

### **Staying Awake Strategies**

**Arm Lift:** While in Savasana pose, bend one arm at the elbow and keep the hand held up. If sleep happens, the arm will drop and wake up its owner.

**Seated posture:** Try seated posture with no back support. If the person nods off, they will awaken when their head drops.

## **4. Hands-On Assists**

When physically assisting students, first ask permission to touch “May I touch/assist you?” Be very gentle and careful not to startle them. Often they are in a deep place inside already and may not know you are about to touch them. You may like to say out loud that you are walking around giving gentle assists to help people become more comfortable so then they are expecting you. You may also when you are near them, make some soft noise like feet shuffling on the floor so they hear you.

Always move a person slowly, watch their face for feedback, feel energetically where their body wants to go and not go. By observing, you will receive a lot of information. This is not time to give anyone major bodywork or big stretches. Be gentle. Often touch alone is very soothing, grounding, and special. Be aware of your own posture as if you are in a yoga posture yourself.

### **Shoulder roll:**

Begin by touching first their hand, then shoulder. Draw their hand out further from their side 1.5 to 2 feet. Press and gently roll shoulder out and away and roll their palm to face upward. This opens the chest increasing breathing capacity and aids in reversing shoulder rolling forward alignment common in many people’s posture.

### **Shoulder press:**

Be sure the student is aware that you are close by and ready to give them an assist so you do not surprise them. The shoulders are key areas of emotion, vulnerability, memory and defense so go in with sensitivity. Position yourself at their head, kneel down and gently place your hands on both of their shoulders. Press one, then the other, moving like a cat when they press

their paws one at a time, rocking gently. This also opens the chest increasing breathing capacity and aids in reversing shoulder rolling forward alignment common in many people's posture.

**Shoulder blade tuck:**

This is a more advanced assist. Standing over the student with your feet at their sides, lift one arm up. Place the other hand underneath on their shoulder blade. Scoop the shoulder blade down, and towards the spine. Place the arm on the floor 1.5 to 2 feet from their sides.

**Neck Touch:**

Do not pull or move neck or head. Instead, carefully place fingertips under neck and gently stroke outward to soothe neck muscles. You are stroking horizontally.

**Energy neck hold:**

One hand on forehead, one on upper chest.

**Leg extension:**

From a squatting position, pick up both of their ankles a few inches off the floor and pull and release in a pulsing motion.

**Leg swing and scissor:**

From a squatting position, pick up both of their ankles and slowly lift a couple of feet. Swing both legs side to side (marma maps will show you points). Scissor feet as you slowly lower the legs back down to carefully rest them on the floor.

**Foot marma point press:**

After resting feet on the floor from legwork, press into arch of the foot, or any energy points on the ankles or feet. Squeeze toes. Foot massage is contraindicated for pregnancy, unless you are a trained in massage or reflexology, because there are points on the feet that may induce labor.



## PART 2. AFTER Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra

### Processing, Integration, and Transition

This is what happens directly after Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. This may be a tender moment for the participants. They can be greatly opened up and feeling vulnerable and rather newborn. They may have experienced themselves as a being beyond this physical body and expanded out into the universe. We can never know exactly what has happened for each person and directly after the experience can be a difficult time to find the words to express it. Take enough time after the Divine Sleep® to assist participants in processing, integrating and transitioning back into the world. Make sure you schedule it into your plan. It can actually be dangerous to turn people out into the city streets for example, to drive or walk, directly after a deep Divine Sleep® experience.

Consider the context of the class or workshop, resources available and what the students will do after they leave the class. Will they be hopping into a car to drive? Are they going to work? Are they at a retreat center and have time to integrate on their own? Do they need to further awaken, ground, or energize? These are considerations to take for creating a bridge between what could be a very deep and internal or expansive experience, into what comes next.

At this time remember to respect everyone's experience and comments, without being judging or critical, even if negative reactions are expressed. It is all part of the process of transformation. It likely has much more to do with their own evolving journey rather than your or what you have guided. You are not responsible for their experience.

### Pranayama

Nadi Shodhana is wonderful as a transition and integration breath, because it balances masculine and feminine energies so that we may move seamlessly from a deep place into the ordinary waking rational world.

### Chanting

The sound of OM continuously or three times. Any of the mantras or bija mantra sounds can be chanted.

## One Word

Ask everyone to say aloud in turn their Name and One Word to express how they feel.

## Co-Listening

Guide this deep form of witnessing to help students feel and share their truth. This is done in partners, either facing each other sitting very close, or seated beside each other and will take about ten to fifteen minutes.

Guidelines for Co-Listening:

- Agreement of confidentiality
- No trying to fix this person, speak, respond, react, or offer advice
- Imagine you are a big heart, big ears, with no mouth
- Here to witness, to take this person in as if their voice was the focus for meditation
- This is a practice of presence
- Speak your truth. What is true in your body, in this moment; what is happening for you?
- Use 'I' words and stay in the present without needing to go into story
- Let students know how long they will speak; let them know silence is alright
- What is spoken need not make sense to listener- it is not for their benefit

Decide who is Speaker #1 and who is Listener #1. Close eyes and lead a centering. Ring bell to begin. Give each student a few minutes to share. Guide the timing for them, perhaps ringing a meditation bell to begin, then as a reminder to wrap it up in the next 30 seconds, then finally to end the share. Repeat for next person sharing.

## Group Share

This is the same as Co-listening but with the whole group in a circle. Each person may share as you go around in a circle (it is also alright to say "pass" when student does not feel like speaking); or only a few may volunteer to share if you only have a few minutes.

## Seated Meditation

Silent seated meditation with a mudra or focus on the breath can be very grounding and integrating.

## Movement

Any form of self-directed movement such as yoga, tai chi, dance, and so on.

## Outdoors

A silent walk outdoors is beautiful after Divine Sleep® because our senses are refreshed and open. It sometimes feels like the vijñanamaya kosha journey to walk in nature after being lead through that experience. We notice more and sense the energies in nature to a greater degree.

## Rest

Maybe the body is tired and wants more stillness and rest. Honor this.

## Choices

Offer choices! Write all choices you can offer students on a board and invite them to be led by their intuition.

## Creative Expression

Creative energies are flowing after Divine Sleep®! Also, the inner 'judge' is often quieter at this time. A great time to create:

- **Art:** draw, color, paint, clay, modeling clay, other
- **Body map drawing:** Have paper with an outline of a body, crayons or felt pens and writing boards. Students color in what they experienced during Yoga Nidra in their bodies, or what is happening currently.
- **Write:** Poetry, journal, automatic writing (whatever comes into mind- write it down), and so on. Write and draw together.
- **Mandala creation:** Mandala is a sacred circle. Any creation done in a circle is a Mandala. Circle drawn on paper, and offer crayons or felt pens; clay or sand on a circular plate.

## Re-Grounding

Offer suggestions to follow up practice with grounding activities if they are still feeling ungrounded.

- Drink water
- Walk and sense feet and legs
- Talk to a someone
- Self-massage
- Tapotement (tapping body with cupped hands)
- Yoga postures that are grounding: Goddess – Deviasana, Mountain – Tadasana, Standing squat – Utkatasana.
- Earth element connection
- Physical body awareness



## Mandala Creation and Reflection

Means 'center, circumference, power circle, magic circle'. All peoples, cultures, of all eras have found circles or Mandala creation a satisfying and meaningful form of expression. Mandalas show us our natural urge to live out our potential, to fulfill the pattern of our whole. They reflect the wholeness that we already are and are maps that reflect where we are currently. It is what Cherokee teacher Dhyani Ywahoo calls 'Bringing your wholeness to light'. Mandala creation is a centering device to bring clarity and deeper wisdom.

### Guidelines to direct students:

- To begin, close eyes, focus inward, you may already notice colors and shapes
- open eyes, be guided by inner vision or response to colors themselves
- choose a color to begin with; outline your circle with it
- suspend judgment and thinking mind
- there is no right or wrong
- can draw more than one Mandala
- let instinct guide your color choices, and forms
- use as little thought as possible

### Reflections on Mandalas:

- Place Mandala on the floor and walk around it; which way is up? Put a "T" at the top
- imagine yourself very small like an ant and moving, crawling through the Mandala as if it were a room
- title it
- notice the most prominent color. What association do you have with this color? Silently reflect (also do this with images, shapes, and theme)
- Co-listen with partner 5 minutes each; end with group circle share



## Chapter 5. The Art of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra



### PART 1. Sourcing and Composing Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Scripts

#### **Creative Energy**

What is creative energy? Where does it come from? Is it from us, or do we source it from God, Goddess, the Earth and elements, Mother Nature? Is it sourcing our deepest, truest Self? Perhaps it is some of all of these things. What I know to be true is that creativity flows when I get out of the way. 'I' meaning the small self, the conscious cognitive ego self. Part of my small 'I' is the 'judge'. When my inner judge is present, he can make it hard to do anything. When I remember that he has a volume control, then I can turn him down and tune into source once again. I can also remember that yoga and meditation practices support me in coming back into my whole Self, such as a yoga posture, some deep breathing, a hand mudra with affirmation.

It is not always necessary to begin from a blank canvas. Build on something that you have read, are drawn to, find in nature, notice in yourself or the world. Make it your own. There are many scripts, themes, and ideas everywhere you search. Take it all in and make it your own. Give it your flavor.

Decide what your intention for your Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra script is, and begin to fill in the pieces. It is always good to jot something down, if only in point form, to clarify what you are intending to do. Remember, you are speaking to students' deepest places and you want to create well thought out experience for them. Your preparation will go a long way. You may also like to write the entire script out in full detail. When it comes time to lead it, you have the freedom to use the script, and to improvise within it.

Give yourself freedom to be guided. Begin your creative practice with Shivalingam Mudra and the statement: "I am a channel for the creative forces of the universe." Your higher self, inner Buddha, inner child, and even your students' higher selves and unspoken truths, may guide you when you are open. You may be surprised by what comes up. It is a beautiful collaboration. Think of a time when you said something in class and a student later let you know your words

were perfectly designed for them. We can catch things in the air. Speak to what is showing up in the room, the energies present.

I like to write my scripts in advance, then when I am leading, I have the freedom to stick with it or modify any part of it to better suit the situation or my intention. I carry a few scripts with me all the time to see in the moment what will work best. I almost never lead anything verbatim, and I continually rewrite as I lead. There are many ways to lead Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra and you will find what is most fulfilling for you. Remember that this practice will still work and be beneficial, even if your students simply hear the sound of your voice.

It is fun to imagine scripts when you are in nature and write them down later. Enjoy yourself and allow it to flow. When guiding Divine Sleep® it is easy to feel divinely guided and the more open we can remain to listening to the higher forces that are always here to guide us, the more we will be in the state of yoga, union with all, and the more tuned in to our students we will be.

### **Themes**

Themes anchor and give a way for you to streamline and focus from unlimited possibilities. This offers a framework for organizing Divine Sleep®. It gives color, vitality, focus, and order to your teaching. When there is a strong feeling of container, the students will naturally feel held and be able to journey deeply inward. In this way, students may be able to deepen their understanding of themselves within the theme. For example, with a second chakra/water element theme, students may become more clear and connected to their second chakra and how water element helps them flow and how they can also get stagnant or rigid in their work or relationships.

Consider what you want to do in Divine Sleep®, or one aspect of it, and base everything around it as an overall theme. Perhaps your theme is Earth element and you can carry this from centering, breathing, movement, and through the Eight Stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Students may or may not be made consciously aware of the theme, or it can be fleshed out as a teaching. For example: "Today our focus is on earth element and what it represents. Qualities of grounding, stability, steadiness, confidence, unwavering anchor. Earth element is located in our bones, legs, feet, and root center between the sitting bones."

### **Possible Themes:**

- A. Balancing all Five Elements Mahabhuta
- B. Balancing Individual Elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether/Space
- C. Balancing all 7 Chakras
- D. Balancing One or two individual Chakras: Root, Navel, Solar, Heart, Throat, Third Eye, Crown.
- E. Individual chakra and its corresponding element. Example: Solar chakra and Fire Element; Heart chakra and Air element.
- F. Patanjali's 8 Limbs
- G. One or two individual Limbs: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, Samadhi.
- H. All of the Senses

- I. One or two individual Senses: taste, smell, sound, sight.
- J. The five Pranavayu energy currents.
- K. One or two individual Vayus: Prana, Apana, Udhana, Samana, Vayana.
- L. Plant, animal, nature: Flower as a mandala of Mother Nature or the Sun; Eagle and corresponding Throat chakra and Space element; Tree from its roots connection to Earth element as a bridge to Air and Space elements.
- M. Mandala, sacred circle.
- N. Balancing Ayurvedic Doshas Pitta, Vata, Kapha.
- O. Balancing Individual Dosha. Example: cooling pitta fire.
- P. Inspiration from other spiritual practices: Native American 4 Directions and Medicine Wheel, Shamanism, Gods or Goddesses. Make sure you really know and are personally practicing these themes before introducing them to students: you need to come about these themes honestly. You may want to ask to make sure that the individual or group wants to, and is willing to focus on these themes.

### Language

Words are potent. It is best to say things in a direct, clear way and in the present moment. Words that end in 'ing' weaken the potential of the power of the meaning. For example, "Bring yourself back to your breath", is much more fruitful than the instruction "Bringing yourself back to your breath". Or, in the Body Scan, "Feel your toes", rather than "feeling your toes".

Students in the state of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra are in a baby-like state. Vulnerable, open, simple, uncomplicated. They respond to words and language that are also simple, uncomplicated, and in the present tense. The sub and unconscious mind is deeply rooted in present moment. Guide them from moment to moment in the present.

Cultivate a vocabulary of words to use in Divine Sleep®. Here are some good directives to use: Bring Awareness To

- Feel
- Allow
- Sink Down Into
- Descend
- Release
- Melt
- Surrender
- Bloom
- Flower
- Blossom
- Let Go
- Drift
- Float
- Dream
- Discover
- Reveal
- Find
- Bring To Light
- Unearth

*\*A note about using the directive 'relax'. This word needs careful consideration. First of all, there are many more interesting directives to use such as: 'release', 'let go of', 'soften', or simply 'bring awareness to'. It is more clear to simply 'bring awareness to' a particular point rather than ask someone to 'relax' it, because 'relax' means some sort of action is required. It could also be interpreted that that body part should be relaxed, and maybe at this time it will not become relaxed. There is the feeling that something is not right just as it is, and that I am in some way wrong, or not quite right. It may in fact create separation when what we are*

intending is unity. In Divine Sleep® we are developing witness consciousness, and asking someone to relax is asking them to do something. It is more powerful to feel something as it is, then it usually responds by relaxing all on its own.

The following four pages are '*Class Plan and Script Worksheets*' to assist in planning and organizing an entire class including a script; and *Divine Sleep®Yoga Nidra -- Script Worksheet (timed for 30-minutes but you may use any time frame you wish)* to help you write your scripts.

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra -- Class Plan and Script Worksheet
Teacher's Intention:
Space preparation, props, other:
<i>timing</i>
BEGINNING: Welcoming
Centering
Context: what we will do/ focus/ theme / intention/ other
Before Yoga Nidra Practices:
MIDDLE: Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra
Set Up
Stage 1. Entry
Stage 2. Heart's Intention / Soothing Place
Stage 3. Body Scan
Stage 4. Breath - Energy Awareness
Stage 5. Sense - Emotion Perception

Stage 6. Images, Healing, One Landscape, Journey
Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention
Stage 8. Return
END: Integration
Closing Centering
Announcements

**Yoga Nidra Script Worksheet**

(timed for 30 mins)

*Your Personal Intention for this particular practice*

*Set Up/ Props You Need*

Stage 1. Entry (2 mins)

Stage 2. Heart's Intention / Soothing Place (3 mins)

Stage 3. Body Scan (7 mins)

Stage 4. Breath – Energy Awareness (3 mins)

Stage 5. Sense – Emotion Perception (4 mins)
Stage 6. Images, Healing, One Landscape, Journey (7 mins)
Stage 7. Repeat Heart’s Intention (1 min)
Stage 8. Return (3 mins)

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## PART 2. SOUND

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### Voice and Volume

Use lengthened vowel sounds to increase the soothing nature of your voice. Make sure everyone can hear you before you begin Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Ask people to raise their hand if they are having a hard time hearing you. You may want to suggest at the beginning for those with hearing challenges to position themselves close to you or to the speakers if you are using a microphone.

Microphones, seem daunting in the beginning, but they can greatly enhance Divine Sleep® and make it more pleasurable and easy to lead because you can even whisper into a microphone and you can use more subtlety, variety and inflection in your tones, and it will all be heard. At times without a microphone, because trying to project, the subtlety can be lost. Also note that as the Divine Sleep® journey progresses, you may become quieter. As your students relax their hearing acuity increases.

You may like to turn the volume up a notch when you use your Anchor “I am awake and aware in Divine Sleep®” to bring them back when you are hearing snoring, sense that they are drifting, or otherwise feel it is the right time to use the Anchor. Using an easily heard volume to bring them back can help them to become awake and alert with greater ease.

### Natural Speaking Pitch

The best way to determine your natural speaking pitch is to hum. Make sure you feel the sound vibrate in your throat because that is where your voice gains much of its rich sound. Now, as you are humming, without stopping, start to speak. The pitch your first word comes out at is your natural speaking voice. See if you can use it. Speak in a steady flow with a soft and comforting tone. Lengthening the vowel sounds is calming.

### Pace

In the beginning stages of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra, find a steady pace that is not too fast, but not so slow that there may be a tendency for students to drift off. Think ‘conversation’ pace. Gradually the practice itself will bring listeners into a slower rhythm and receptive place where you can slow down the pace.

Do not rush. Let the experiences you are guiding have a chance for listeners to fully feel into what you are asking and inviting them to feel. Experiencing in your own body your felt sense of what you guide is the BEST way to find the right pace. Notice your body parts, your breath. The most important aspect of pacing is the spacing between words. This gives an opening in which to sense instructions internally.

Another way you can pace, especially during the Body Scan, is to say the line out loud -- then repeat it *silently* in your own mind.

When you write your yoga nidra scripts you may like to insert ellipses “...” to remind yourself to allow silence. You may also like to write in the number of minutes or seconds you will give them to create their intention sankalpas and then affirm them three times, so that you remember not

to speed through it. And you can look at seconds on a clock/watch to make sure you give enough time.

### **Silent Space is the Meditation Space**

The amount of silent space varies for each Stage of yoga nidra. It is within the silent space that your listener becomes both the 'experiencer' and the 'meditator' who feels what you are leading in the body-mind-heart. Also remember to feel it in *your body* during the silent space. (you can try watching a second-hand timer to see the time if you like). Here are some guidelines:

- Stage 3. Body Scan: after one body part, leave about 3-5 seconds. After feel 'whole body' or one side of the body give 5-8 seconds of silence because it's a larger territory to feel, and there may be many different sensations listeners are noticing.
- Stage 4. Breath-Energy Awareness: about 5-7 seconds after each instruction. "And now notice your breath, your natural unaltered breath" *5-7seconds of silence* "Notice each inhale" *5-7 seconds of silence*; continue on with whole script in this way. The teacher is silent 1/3-1/2 of the time during this stage.
- Stage 5. Sense – Emotion Perception: about 5-8 seconds of silence, or more for feeling emotions.
- Stage 6. – Silent space will vary throughout this stage.

### **How Long for the Longest Silence?**

A rule of thumb is to not have any more than 45-seconds of silence during yoga nidra. The longest silent space is during Sankalpa Heart's Intention Statement. This is a 'guided meditation'- students are expecting to hear your voice most of the time. If you choose to have longer spaces of silence than 45-seconds, then make sure you tell your listeners before the yoga nidra that will happen.

### **Repeat Key Lines or Words**

Repeating key lines out loud can help students to feel them more deeply each time or to really focus on them. It also helps them to focus, as during Divine Sleep® it can be difficult to focus because they may be drifting off or mind wandering, so this can actually help keep them on target, on task.

In Divine Sleep® we tap into the subconscious, a place that does not know time in the way we know it in our conscious existence. The subconscious is slow, symbolic and sees rich imagery and pranic experiences. Thus, we give time for this important part of ourselves to live and be felt. When we are leading Divine Sleep®, we are still in our conscious, alert and efficient mind. We can have glimpses and moments of the subconscious, but we are guiding and holding the experience for others so we naturally stay mostly at this conscious level of being. The students are in another place, higher mind states, and we need to respect that by leading them with care. They may need to hear instructions two or three times. Keep observing participants and notice where they are at and if they are following you.

### **Music**

Music is healing and can be used to enhance the benefits of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. Music and sound have also been used to heal from time immemorial. Medicine men and women,

healers, shaman, priests and priestesses and musicians have used voice, music and sound to heal. Music can be an avenue of awareness and communication for people who are not able to communicate or understand through other modes of communication. Choose music carefully to support your intention and focus for the specific Divine Sleep® you are guiding. Music without vocals is best so that the students can follow your voice alone. Select your music wisely. Listen to the entire track before you use it for Divine Sleep®. Of course, music is optional and it is fine to not use it.

Have the music cued up and check volume and other practicalities before you begin to create a safe and supportive atmosphere conducive to going inward. Nothing disturbs the atmosphere more quickly than having to mess around with audio equipment. Make sure the volume does not drown out your voice. If it is too quiet, on the other hand, participants may strain to hear it, or it may surprise them when they do hear it.

**Tips for selecting music:**

- **Flowing melodies rather than disjointed or fragmented sounds**
- **Sounds from nature like ocean waves, babbling brook, or forest sounds can be very supportive for connecting to the elements and relaxation**
- **Try not to use music that is popular because participants may have associated memories**
- **Find out from your students if the music worked for them and be open to suggestions of other music**
- **Choose music based on the mood you desire. Music could be selected to have a soothing and contemplative mood. Or choosing music that is more stimulating**
- **Music with a slow tempo and low pitch is best. It may be irritating or distracting to have a higher pitch or frequency.**

**YogiTunes.com music** – This is the only company we’ve found that gives you PERFORMANCE RIGHTS -- meaning you can legally use all of their music online, on a website, in recordings, etc (read up on the fine print before recording anything to be sure). This is a monthly subscription. They add music all the time, offer playlists, and you can create your own. I use only one track per yoga nidra session and put it on ‘REPEAT’. I do not play one song after another for yoga nidra as it changes too much. Make sure you listen through an entire song before using it for your yoga nidra sessions.

**Spacious Silence**

Make sure to include a lot of spacious silence in your Yoga Nidras. Give students time to fill in the gaps with their process.



### **PART 3. TEACHING and GUIDING DIVINE SLEEP® YOGA NIDRA**

It is my hope that you will use this training as a foundation to bring yoga nidra to the world. There are several types of yoga nidra being taught in the world today, and also some people offer 'yoga nidra' with no real training behind what they are leading. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is unique, known, and sought after.

Lead yoga nidra only at the level that you are comfortable and experienced in. Through your own practice, exploration and training, you may want to investigate more advanced practices that involve the chakras, emotions, Ayurveda and other models. Pace yourself and your students in incremental steps on the Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra path.

Make sure to give students your contact information. Be prepared with resources beyond what you offer or are trained in such as councilors, therapists, body workers and so on, for deeper work or strong emotions, as an adjunct to yoga nidra. You may want to include a waiver form similar to hatha yoga classes/studios (research online for current waivers at yoga and meditation studios or with insurance companies).

#### **Settings**

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is an extremely versatile practice which can be led to groups or individuals in a wide range of settings. Although yoga nidra may be practiced lying down, it can also be practiced seated, which brings it out of the yoga studio and into the world, where it is truly needed.

#### **Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra has been led or practiced in these environments and others:**

- Schools and educational centers
- Work place, corporate (business save thousands on healthier, more relaxed employees and there is lots of research to prove this.)
- Hospitals- look for community outreach programs (contact director who may have proposal forms); 'social services' for employees
- Community centers (most have proposal forms)
- Rehab centers
- Health expos
- Health centers

- Shelters
- Prisons
- Music festivals (often have yoga classes now)
- Yoga festivals (on the rise)
- Treatment room as part of massage, physical therapy, and bodywork
- Hatha yoga: short version to end yoga /movement class
- Exercise/Dance class: short version to end any movement class or practice

**Consider speaking at organizations to network and create interest for a class and find students:**

- Support groups looking for someone to give a talk (start as a 'donation' and can turn it into fee if interested)
- Nurses associations who are often looking for alternative methods and interesting speakers
- Toastmasters – learn how to speak and have fun doing it
- Library research for how to make a proposal
- Breakfast programs –go speak (networking)
- Women's groups – go speak
- Women's Expos

Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra can be practiced with a live teacher or from recording or live stream which makes it accessible and easy to practice. It is a powerful tool to have in one's back pocket, knowing that within a few minutes of practice one can transform reconnect. I have often had students tell me that the only thing that got them through a rough time was their Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra recordings! When people are in a major shift or crisis such as a death in the family, depression, anxiety, or insomnia, yoga nidra is a helpful and reliable method to bring people relief.

**Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra 1-Hour Workshop Outline**

**20-minutes – Context, Meditation on Koshas, Basic Info, Benefits, Q&A:**

**CONTEXT:** Explain what yoga nidra is: 'guided lying down meditation. And I will be leading you through the 5 Kosha levels of your being which we'll experience in a short seated meditation in a minute'. 'The reason I love yoga nidra is...' Clarify what you will be doing during this session: Kosha meditation, info about yoga nidra, Q&A, the main experience: Guided Yoga Nidra, Closing wrap-up.

**SEATED GUIDED KOSHA MEDITATION:** This is a meditation to briefly feel each koshic level. You can guide what is below and add more words in, or use the 'Five Koshas and Light Guided Meditation Script in Chapter 2:

1. "Feel your physical body.
2. Become aware of breath and energy.
3. Notice thoughts in the mind. Become aware of feelings and emotions.
4. Now become aware of the part of you that has been witnessing body, breath, thoughts and feelings – your Witness Consciousness.
5. Now feel yourself becoming very expansive and open in body, breath, and thoughts. Allow bliss to arise, the bliss that has always been here underneath everything else."

(You may also like to lead them to find their Heart's intention, then state it as the truth three times, as a pre-cursor to re-visiting it in yoga nidra).

**BASICS including KOSHAS:**

- How the Koshas link to the Stages: Entry is to relax you; Heart's Intention to connect into yourself; Body Scan to feel 1<sup>st</sup> level of being physical body; etc. (It's helpful to have the Kosha bullseye mapped on an easel or power point).
- When and Where: How to take it home – recordings, livestream classes, etc.
- What are the BENEFITS? Improved sleep, deep relaxation, balances nervous system, shifts you into healing parasympathetic mode... 20-minutes yoga nidra can feel like 2-3-hours of sleep! and add more...

**QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATION:** Any questions students? (You can demo proper alignment of postures and answer any questions).

**30-minutes – MAIN EVENT: LEAD Yoga Nidra – they will LOVE you!**

**10-minutes – INTEGRATION Closing:** Numerous choices: Mudra, Co-listening, group sharing, drawing, writing, silence and so on.

## Chapter 6. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Scripts



### About Scripts

*The world of reality has limits;  
The world of imagination is boundless.  
---Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

Scripts are guidelines for the actual experience you lead. It is recommended to lead yoga nidra from a script – you do not need to memorize it all. Five koshas and eight stages – it can be easy to get lost or forget how much time you will need to complete the entire practice – especially because you will be in a meditative state yourself.

Using a script will also help you to manage your time. Your script is your point of reference to stay anchored through the map of Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra. It can help remind you of the Stage you are on, keep you flowing in the set order that you intended, and help you to remember specifics like all of body parts, so as not to leave out any body parts. Staying centered and anchored by using a script will make a difference to the experience of the students.

The more you guide yoga nidra, the more you will find other words and ideas will naturally weaving their way in. Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra is a beautiful tapestry woven of intention, script, spontaneity, creativity, the 'vibe' or energy from the students, the moment itself, and perhaps guidance from beyond. In this way, we are leading from a deeper place within ourselves, and inviting all layers of who we are to come alive!

It is important to keep your eyes open most of the time, and tune your awareness to the students. This is a meditation that embraces the 'whole' group. You may like to pause and take the time with each step to feel it within yourself, and is the best method of finding the appropriate timing and rhythm of the practice. For example, when leading the Sankalpa intention, search deep inside for your own; during the body scan, take the time to feel each

body part within yourself. This gives cues for timing and makes the pace of your guidance in real time, as well as making this a practice and meditation for yourself.

The script could be as minimal as one word for each of the Stages, or as long as many paragraphs. I always print mine out double spaced so I can jot down new inspirations as I lead. I am always updating the scripts and many, like any creative endeavors, can take time to evolve, and also invests this practice with richness, poignancy and clarity.

Be aware of the level and experience of the students. It is not a good time to 'teach' something new during yoga nidra, because we do not want the students to engage 'thinking mind' during practice. Instead, teach new concepts beforehand when they are seated.

## Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Scripts

Following are three scripts for you to guide. Allow for spaciousness and gaps between sentences. Repeat phrases or lines that feel key to you. Feel free to guide them as they are, or find your own words to modify. Ellipses '...' are an invitation for silent spaces for your students to feel into the experience you are leading.

### A. Six Stages Script (Stages: 1-4, 7-8) (approximately 20-minutes)

#### Stage 1. Entry:

"Allow yourself to get comfy... Make any final adjustments to get as comfortable as you can... Feel free to move or to adjust anything, any time during this journey, to support your comfort. Moving slowly and mindfully when you move... Becoming more aware now: this is a practice of awareness... Noticing your body resting, resting... Aware of your breath... Become more and more aware of each level of your being as you are guided through sensations, breath, thoughts, feelings... Allow yourself to be the observer of all that you truly are. The observer who is filled with compassion and acceptance...

Settle into your body... Settle your body down into the ground... Feel the ground underneath you, holding and supporting you in your practice today... Feel secure here in your body, your body on the ground...

#### Stage 2. Heart's Intention

Begin to feel your breath, your natural breath... Aware of breath in your chest... The easy rise and fall of breath in your chest...

Now go inward, deep inside and notice *'What is my heart's deepest longing?'* Let the answer come from your heart... **(give 20 seconds or more of silence).**

From your heart's longing, create a positive statement - in present tense, as though it's already happening. Something like *'I am whole and complete exactly as I am.'* You can use this statement if you like it but if you heard your heart's wish, then state it three times silently to yourself as the truth... **(give 20 seconds or more of silence).**

#### Stage 3. Body Scan:

Now let your awareness move through your body as you are guided. Feel each body part then move on to the next when prompted. Do not worry if you cannot feel every body part.

Sense your face... Notice your jaw... Become aware of sensation in your mouth... Feel the roof of your mouth... underneath the tongue... notice teeth... gums... tongue...root of the tongue... sense taste in your mouth... Now feel all of the parts of your mouth all together as a whole... the entire mouth.

Now feel your nose... nostrils... right nostril... left nostril... both nostrils. Feel your breath passing through the nostrils... aware of your sense smell...feel your nose. Notice your ears... feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears... backs of the ears...ear canals...inner ears. Aware of your ears hearing.

Now feel your eyes... eyelids... eyelashes... surface of the eyes... centers of the eyes... backs of the eyes... behind the eyes. Feel your eyes. Become aware of your forehead... crown... whole head... throat... neck... right shoulder...right arm... hand... right palm.

Feel right hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th fingers... All of the fingers... Feel now the whole hand vibrant with energy... Aware of right wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... Feel throat center... And notice left shoulder... arm... hand. Notice left hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th finger... All of the fingers... whole hand radiant with life... Become aware of left wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... and throat center.

Feel the chest... heart space... heart center... stomach... navel center... notice shoulder blades... between shoulder blades... ribs on the back... sense the low back... buttocks. Become aware of your whole back... Feel the right hip... right thigh... knee... right lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole of the right foot... notice big right toe... second toe... third toe... fourth toe... and fifth toe... feel all of the toes.

Become aware of sensation in the navel... left hip... thigh... knee... left lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole... feel the big left toe...second toe... third toe... fourth...and fifth toe... feel all of the toes. Feel both feet, legs... torso front and back... hands and arms... neck and head. Feel the whole body now... whole body.

Become aware of right side of the body... Now feel the left side of the body... Feel back body, side of the body facing the ground... back body... And now feel front body, side of the body facing the sky... front body... Feel the whole body now, whole body... Notice the entire global feeling of the body.

#### **Stage 4. Breath - Energy Awareness**

Become aware now of your natural breath as it flows through you... No need to change your breath... Feel your breath flowing easily and rhythmically through your body... Notice your breath and follow it...

Now begin to feel the pause between the inhale and exhale... Notice the gap... Now begin to feel the pause between the exhale and inhale... Without holding or changing the breath, notice the pause between breaths... Keep noticing your breath...

#### **Stages 5. and 6. --**

#### **Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention**

Recall your hearts intention, and your positive statement. Repeat it now three times as though it is already happening. It is already the truth. (give 20-seconds or more).

### **Stage 8. Return**

Become aware now of the part of you that has been Witnessing – observing yourself in the journey, breath and body... Notice yourself as the Witness.

Begin to feel thoughts and feelings arising within you... Become aware of your breath, breath flowing through you with ease and peace... And now begin to deepen your breath... Breathe through your entire body... Notice your back-body, side of the body facing the ground... Feel all the places where you touch the ground...

We are now completing practice. Begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... Notice your toes and begin to wiggle your toes... Gently rock your head side to side, a slow awakening...

Draw a deeper breath into your belly, into your chest... Rock slowly over to your left side if that is comfortable for you. Take more breaths... Press your hands into the floor, and slowly flow up to a comfortable seated position... Lengthen your spine... Take a full breath in and as you exhale imagine filling with clear light... Let your hands rise up to your face... Simply notice how you feel right now... Notice the effects of practice.

[Aum] Peace, Peace, eternal Peace. May there be peace, eternal Peace in your heart. Ever so slowly now allow the eyes to slowly open to a soft gaze on the floor."

## **B. Five Element Images Script: Eight Stages**

(approximately 30-minutes)

### **Stage 1. Entry**

"There is no way to do this practice wrong. There is no wrong thing you can experience. You may, along the way, feel relaxed, easy and peaceful. You might also happen to feel discomfort or unease. That is normal and natural during meditation. As best you can, welcome in everything that you notice, pleasant or unpleasant... What is important is to be with what is...

Take a deep breath in and as you exhale, sigh a long sigh... And again: deep breath in and 'ahhhhh...' And now more softly, inhale and exhale 'ahhhh...

Feel the level of ease within your body... Notice the level of ease... And now allow the ease to double as you exhale your breath... Every exhalation is an opportunity to double the ease within you...

### **Stage 2. Heart's Intention with Soothing Place**

Imagine yourself now in a place that feels soothing, peaceful and calming... Peaceful and calm... This could be somewhere that you know, or an imaginary place... It may be outside in nature that you like – such as at the beach, or in the woods - or it could be indoors somewhere

that is soothing to you... Feel yourself here... And begin to see all the surroundings: the colors... light... objects... plants... or any special objects – you get to choose what is here... All things peaceful and calming for you...

Now see yourself here in your soothing peaceful place... Feel this place calming and soothing you... Your soothing peaceful place is always here for you... At any time during practice, you can come back here... Especially if anything feels intense, odd or uncomfortable in anyway, come back to your soothing place. You can come back to this place anytime you would like to. All you have to do is remember, and you'll be back here... Your soothing place is always here, and part of who you are... Come back here when you want – it's part of the practice...

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Go inside into the heart-space... Perhaps envision a flower pulsing within your heart-space... Heart-space enlivening with breath... And ask **'What is my heart's deepest desire? What does my heart long for?'**... (*give 20 seconds or more of silence*).

Now create an intention based on your heart's longing. This is a positive statement, as though it is already happening, in present tense. Something like: *'I am spacious and relaxed'*. You can use this statement if you like it, but if you heard your heart's wish, then state it three times silently to yourself as the truth. Allow any colors, images or symbols to also arise with your statement... (*give 20 seconds or more of silence*).

### **Stage 3. Body Scan**

Now let your awareness move through your body as you are guided. Feel each body part then move on to the next when prompted. Do not worry if you cannot feel every body part.

Sense your face... Notice your jaw... Become aware of sensation in your mouth... Feel the roof of your mouth... underneath the tongue... notice teeth... gums... tongue...root of the tongue... sense taste in your mouth... Now feel all of the parts of your mouth all together as a whole... the entire mouth.

Now feel your nose... nostrils... right nostril... left nostril... both nostrils. Feel your breath passing through the nostrils... aware of your sense smell...feel your nose. Notice your ears... feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears... backs of the ears...ear canals...inner ears. Aware of your ears hearing.

Now feel your eyes... eyelids... eyelashes... surface of the eyes... centers of the eyes... backs of the eyes... behind the eyes. Feel your eyes. Become aware of your forehead... crown... whole head... throat... neck... right shoulder...right arm... hand... right palm.

Feel right hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th fingers... All of the fingers... Feel now the whole hand vibrant with energy... Aware of right wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... Feel throat center... And notice left shoulder... arm... hand. Notice left hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th finger... All of the fingers... whole hand radiant with life... Become aware of left wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... and throat center.

Feel the chest... heart space... heart center... stomach... navel center... notice shoulder blades... between shoulder blades... ribs on the back... sense the low back... buttocks. Become aware of your whole back... Feel the right hip... right thigh... knee... right lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole of the right foot... notice big right toe... second toe... third toe... fourth toe... and fifth toe... feel all of the toes.

Become aware of sensation in the navel... left hip... thigh... knee... left lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole... feel the big left toe...second toe... third toe... fourth...and fifth toe... feel all of the toes. Feel both feet, legs... torso front and back... hands and arms... neck and head. Feel the whole body now... whole body.

Become aware of right side of the body... Now feel the left side of the body... Feel back body, side of the body facing the ground... back body... And now feel front body, side of the body facing the sky... front body... Feel the whole body now, whole body... Notice the entire global feeling of the body.

#### **Stage 4. Breath – Energy Awareness**

Observe your breath.... Natural breath... unaltered breath... Feel the inhalation... Aware of exhalation...

Now count your exhalations from 10 back down to 0. If you get lost or lose track, without judgment or agitation, begin again at 10... *(wait about 20 seconds)*.

Notice your breath... Counting your breaths... *(10 more silent seconds)*.  
Now let go counting the breaths.

#### **Stage 5. Sense – Emotion Perception**

Feel a place in your body that feels open and relaxed... Become aware of the sensations of this open place... Completely feel the sensation of open relaxation in this place... And now, allow the feeling of openness and relaxation to spread through your body, and to completely fill your body. Feel relaxation in your belly... *(you can continue with large areas of body: arms, legs, torso, head)*.

Now imagine your body becoming heavy, very heavy and sinking into the ground... Heavy, as though you are filled with sand... Body heavy sinking into soft receptive ground underneath you... Body heavy and sinking... Heavy and sinking... How does it feel to feel heavy?...

Now imagine your body becoming light... Light as a feather... Light and floating...

Feel heavy again... Completely heavy and dense...

Now feel light again...

Go between feeling heavy and light on your own now...

Now feel both heavy and light together...

Feel happiness, happy, joy... Remember feeling happy... Where does happiness live in your body?.. Notice where you feel it... Let happiness fully expand through your body, through your whole being...

In your mind, silently state: 'I am awake and aware. Awake and noticing. Awake and aware in yoga nidra'.

### **Stage 6. Images: Five Elements Theme**

Use all of your senses to imagine these things as they are named. Hear, feel, smell, see, using any of your senses to experience each one fully. There is no need to try. Let them come to you:

- Snow capped mountain, Snow capped mountain, Snow capped mountain.
- Stone wall, Stone wall, Stone wall.
- Babbling brook, babbling brook, babbling brook.
- Deer drinking at the river, Deer drinking at the river, Deer drinking at the river.
- Torrential rain, Torrential rain, Torrential rain.
- Dewdrops on a new green leaf, Dewdrops on a new green leaf, Dewdrops on a new green leaf.
- Sunrise, Sunrise, Sunrise.
- Flute music in a forest, Flute music in a forest, Flute music in a forest.
- Scarf blowing in the wind, Scarf blowing in the wind, Scarf blowing in the wind.
- Stars in the night sky, Stars in the night sky, Stars in the night sky.

### **Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention**

Recall your heart's longing and repeat it silently three times. If your heart's statement has changed in any way, that is okay. Allow colors, images, symbols, landscapes to arise with your statement should that happen... *(give 20-seconds or more of silence)*.

### **Stage 8. Return**

Become aware now of your body's healing energy. Inherent joy... And now become aware of the part of you that has been Witnessing – observing yourself in the journey, breath and body... Notice yourself as the Witness.

Begin to feel thoughts and feelings arising within you... Become aware of your breath, breath flowing through you with ease and peace... And now begin to deepen your breath... Breathe through your entire body... Notice your back-body, side of the body facing the ground... Feel all the places where you touch the ground...

We are now completing practice. Begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... Notice your toes and begin to wiggle your toes... Gently rock your head side to side, a slow awakening...

Draw a deeper breath into your belly, into your chest... Rock slowly over to your left side if that is comfortable for you. Take more breaths... Press your hands into the floor, and slowly flow up to a comfortable seated position... Lengthen your spine... Take a full breath in and as you

exhale imagine filling with clear light... Let your hands rise up to your face... Simply notice how you feel right now... Notice the effects of practice.

[Aum] Peace, Peace, eternal Peace. May there be peace, eternal Peace in your heart. Ever so slowly now allow the eyes to slowly open to a soft gaze on the floor.”

### C. Ocean-Moon Nyasa Healing Script: Eight Stages

(approximately 40-minutes)

#### Stage 1. Entry

As best you can, welcome everything in, just as it is... Whether sensations arise, thoughts or feelings flow through you, notice and welcome them in... Or perhaps you notice something external - like a sound that catches your attention or distracts you... If distractions happen, let *it* be the reminder to bring you back into deep inner focus, no need to go into agitation... Welcoming in, as best you can, everything that you notice inside or outside of you...

One: Allow your body to be heavy... Feel your body, letting yourself sink down into the ground... Letting go...

Two: Feel your breath... Feel it flowing through your body... Feel your breath and it's flow...

Three: Allow your thoughts to settle... Notice thoughts that are present for you right now... Aware of feelings and emotions... touching in with acceptance and kindness...

Four: Let personality and the roles you play drop away... Sensing your essence - pure, clear, and free... Notice yourself as the kind observer who greets all that arises...

Five: Notice a sense of joy... Feel bliss... Allow bliss to fill your body... Bliss filling your whole being...

#### Stage 2. Sankalpa with Soothing Place

Imagine yourself now in a place that feels soothing, peaceful and calming... Peaceful and calm... This could be somewhere that you know, or an imaginary place... It may be outside in nature that you like – such as at the beach, or in the woods - or it could be indoors somewhere that is soothing to you... Feel yourself here... And begin to see all the surroundings: the colors... light... objects... plants... or any special objects – you get to choose what is here... All things peaceful and calming for you...

Now see yourself here in your soothing peaceful place... Feel this place calming and soothing you... Your soothing peaceful place is always here for you... At any time during practice, you can come back here... Especially if anything feels intense, odd or uncomfortable in anyway, come back to your soothing place. You can come back to this place anytime you would like to. All you have to do is remember, and you'll be back here... Your soothing place is always here, and part of who you are... Come back here when you want – it's part of the practice...

Begin to feel your breath, your natural breath... Aware of breath in your chest... The easy rise and fall of breath in your chest... Now go inward, deep inside and notice **'What is my heart's**

***deepest longing?'*** Let the answer come from your heart... ***(give 20 seconds or more of silence)***.

From your heart's longing, create a positive statement - in present tense, as though it's already happening. Something like *'I am whole and complete exactly as I am.'* You can use this statement if you like it but if you heard your heart's wish, then state it three times silently to yourself as the truth..." ***(give 20 seconds or more of silence)***.

### **Stage 3. Body Scan**

Now let your awareness move through your body as you are guided. Feel each body part then move on to the next when prompted. Do not worry if you cannot feel every body part.

Sense your face... Notice your jaw... Become aware of sensation in your mouth... Feel the roof of your mouth... underneath the tongue... notice teeth... gums... tongue...root of the tongue... sense taste in your mouth... Now feel all of the parts of your mouth all together as a whole... the entire mouth.

Now feel your nose... nostrils... right nostril... left nostril... both nostrils. Feel your breath passing through the nostrils... aware of your sense smell...feel your nose. Notice your ears... feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears... backs of the ears...ear canals...inner ears. Aware of your ears hearing.

Now feel your eyes... eyelids... eyelashes... surface of the eyes... centers of the eyes... backs of the eyes... behind the eyes. Feel your eyes. Become aware of your forehead... crown... whole head... throat... neck... right shoulder...right arm... hand... right palm.

Feel right hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th fingers... All of the fingers... Feel now the whole hand vibrant with energy... Aware of right wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... Feel throat center... And notice left shoulder... arm... hand. Notice left hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th finger... All of the fingers... whole hand radiant with life... Become aware of left wrist... forearm... elbow... upper arm... shoulder... and throat center.

Feel the chest... heart space... heart center... stomach... navel center... notice shoulder blades... between shoulder blades... ribs on the back... sense the low back... buttocks. Become aware of your whole back... Feel the right hip... right thigh... knee... right lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole of the right foot... notice big right toe... second toe... third toe... fourth toe... and fifth toe... feel all of the toes.

Become aware of sensation in the navel... left hip... thigh... knee... left lower leg... ankle... top of the foot... sole... feel the big left toe...second toe... third toe... fourth...and fifth toe... feel all of the toes. Feel both feet, legs... torso front and back... hands and arms... neck and head. Feel the whole body now... whole body.

Become aware of right side of the body... Now feel the left side of the body... Feel back body, side of the body facing the ground... back body... And now feel front body, side of the body

facing the sky... front body... Feel the whole body now, whole body... Notice the entire global feeling of the body.

In your mind, silently state: 'I am awake and aware. Awake and noticing. Awake and aware in yoga nidra'.

#### **Stage 4. Breath - Energy Awareness**

Become aware of your breath, unaltered breath... Begin to feel sensations in the body as your breath naturally flows through... Aware of places of ease... Notice places of openness... Aware of sensations in the body with your breath... Perhaps places of tightness or tension – simply notice. There's nothing to fix or change here... Noticing the breath... Aware all the various sensations in your body... Aware of breath... Aware of sensations...

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Now notice your breath... Your natural breath as it flows through you... Feel the in breath... Note the out breath... As you exhale, become aware of a wave of breath and energy passing downward through your body... From crown to feet, downward the breath flows...

And as you inhale a fresh wave of breath and energy flows upward through your body... As you exhale, notice the downward wave flowing through your body... Inhale feel the fresh wave upward... Continue to notice your breath flowing in this way on your own now...

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In your mind, silently state: 'I am awake and aware. Awake and noticing. Awake and aware in yoga nidra'.

#### **Stage 5. Sense - Emotion Perception**

Now imagine your body feeling contracted... All muscles and tissues pulling inward... Inward flowing like a seed... Tiny tight small... Feel sensations of contraction in your body... How does it feel to feel contraction?...

And now feel the opposite... Feel your body expansive... Open and spacious... Outward flowing... Feel the sensations of expansion... How does it feel to feel expansion?...

Now feel a place in your body that feels tight, contracted... Let that feeling of contraction spread through your body... Feel contraction...

Now feel a place in your body that feels expansion, open and free... Let that awareness of openness spread through your whole body...

And now see if on your own, you can go back and forth, between feeling contracted and expanded, on your own...

Now feel both together: notice contraction and expansion at the same time...

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Feel content... Content – perhaps like a cat stretching in the sunlight... Feel content... Notice if there is a particular place you feel contented in your body... Let the feeling of contentedness fully unfold throughout your body... Feel content... Notice if there is a color, or associate a

color with the feeling of contentment... What is the feeling of content for you? Allow this color and feeling to completely fill you...

In your mind, silently state: 'I am awake and aware. Awake and noticing. Awake and aware in yoga nidra'.

### **Stage 6. Images, Landscape, Healing and Journey**

Use all of your senses to imagine these things as they are named. Hear, feel, smell, see, using any of your senses to experience each one fully. There is no need to try. Let them come to you:

Desert... the desert... notice the desert...

Full moon... full moon... full moon...

Ocean waves... ocean waves... ocean waves...

Wind chimes... wind chimes... wind chimes...

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And now you are at the ocean... Walking at the ocean... You can feel your legs and feet and you feel present in your body walking... You can hear the waves washing onto the shore... You notice the rhythmic waves... You observe the sunlight on the water... The line where the ocean and the sky meets is crisp and clear - the calming horizon... The sky is open, bright blue, and you feel the expansiveness of the sky... You see yourself from above, or from behind, and you are walking on the shoreline, in all this beauty of nature...

And now you feel like resting, and so you may choose to sit, or to lie down in the sand... Noticing all the places your body touches the warm sand beneath you... And you sink in even deeper... More relaxed... Feeling peaceful and at ease... Feeling like you have merged with nature, with the beauty here at the ocean...

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Going inward now... go inward... Imagine the full moon... Crystal clear moon... The healing moon... Now imagine the moon and its healing energy - or another image or object of your choosing - in the key points in your body. Beginning with the crown: Imagine the full moon at the crown of your head... Moons on your temples... And feel moons on your jaws... Moon on the back of your head... And notice the healing vibration of the moon soothing, calming and cooling absorbing into these places into you...

Imagine moons under your collarbones... Moons in your shoulder joints... biceps... elbows... forearms... wrists... and moons in the centers of your palms... The moons radiate silver, calming energy, that spreads through your hands, and arms from these points...

Moons on your shoulder blades... a moon between the shoulder blades... Moon on your low back... and one on your belly... Moons in your hip joints... thighs... knees... shins... ankles... and soles of your feet... Feel the moon energy balancing and healing you... Feel the moon in your heart center...

And now the sound 'Vam' arises from within the moons in synchronicity, bathing you with healing energy... Sounding like: 'Vaaaaammmmmmm'... Each time you exhale, the sound of Vam flows through you... Healing and balancing you at all levels of being... And you rest here

for some time, receiving all the healing energy you need right now... *(give 20 seconds or more of silence).*

### **Stage 7. Repeat Sankalpa**

In this place of love, healing and bliss, recall your hearts intention, and your positive statement. Repeat it now three times as though it is already happening. It is already the truth. *(give 20-seconds or more).*

### **Stage 8. Return**

And your healing energy continues to wash through you... Your Heart's intention continues to unfold within you, even as you journey back now. You rise up on the beach and walk back, retracing your footprints in the sand... And you see yourself returning now... You come all the way back to this room, here in this room you began in. Slowly returning...

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Become aware now of your body's healing energy... Sensing inherent joy... And now become aware of the part of you that has been Witnessing – observing yourself in the journey, breath and body... Notice yourself as the Witness...

Begin to feel thoughts and feelings arising within you... Become aware of your breath, breath flowing through you with ease and peace... And now begin to deepen your breath... Breathe through your entire body... Notice your back-body, side of the body facing the ground... Feel all the places where you touch the ground...

We are now completing practice. Begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... Notice your toes and begin to wiggle your toes... Gently rock your head side to side, a slow awakening...

Draw a deeper breath into your belly, into your chest... Rock slowly over to your left side if that is comfortable for you. Take more breaths... Press your hands into the floor, and slowly flow up to a comfortable seated position... Lengthen your spine. Take a full breath in and as you exhale imagine filling with clear light... Let your hands rise up to your face... Simply notice how you feel right now... Notice the effects of practice.

[Aum] Peace, Peace, eternal Peace. May there be peace, eternal Peace in your heart. Ever so slowly now allow the eyes to slowly open to a soft gaze on the floor."

## **D. SHORT SCRIPT** (approximately 5-7 minutes)

### **Stage 1. Entry**

"Settle into your body... Settle your body down into the ground... Feel the ground underneath you, holding and supporting you in your practice today..."

### **Stage 2. Heart's Intention**

"Begin to feel your breath, your natural breath... Aware of breath in your chest... Now go inward, deep inside and notice 'What is my heart's deepest longing?' Let the answer come from your heart... (give 20 seconds+ of silence). From your heart's longing, create a positive statement - in present tense, as though it's already happening. Something like 'I am whole and complete exactly as I am.' (give 20 seconds or more of silence).

### **Stage 3. Body Scan**

"Now let your awareness move through your body as you are guided. Sense your face... Notice your jaw... Become aware of sensation in your mouth... feel the entire mouth. Now feel your nose... both nostrils. Notice your ears... feel the wrinkles and folds of the ears. Aware of your ears hearing. Now feel your eyes... centers of the eyes... Feel your eyes. Become aware of your forehead... crown... whole head... throat... neck... right shoulder...right arm... hand... right palm.

Feel right hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th fingers... All fingers... Feel the whole hand vibrant with energy... Aware of the arm... shoulder... Feel throat center... And notice left shoulder... arm... hand. Notice left hand thumb... 1st finger... 2nd finger... 3rd finger... 4th finger... All of the fingers... whole hand radiant with life... Become aware of left arm... shoulder... and throat center.

Feel the chest... heart space... belly... Now notice the back: shoulder blades... between shoulder blades... ribs on the back... low back... buttocks. Feel the hips... thighs... knees... lower legs... feet... Notice all of the toes. Feel the whole body now... whole body."

### **Stage 4. Breath – Energy Awareness**

"Now notice your breath... Your natural breath as it flows through you – no need to change your breath... Feel the 'in' breath... Note the 'out' breath... The waves of breath..."

### **Stage 5-6 (also Soothing Place)**

Imagine yourself now in a place that feels soothing, peaceful and calming... Peaceful and calm... This could be somewhere that you know, or an imaginary place... It may be outside in nature that you like – such as at the beach, or in the woods - or it could be indoors somewhere that is soothing to you... Feel yourself here... And begin to see all the surroundings. All things peaceful and calming for you... Now see yourself here in your soothing peaceful place...

**Stage 7. Repeat Heart's Intention** (You can Repeat Heart's Intention if you have time, or leave this stage out.)

### **Stage 8. Return**

Begin to sense yourself as calm awareness now... Notice thoughts and feelings arising within you... Become aware of your breath and energy... And begin to deepen your breath... Breathe through your entire body... Feel your body... Begin to wiggle your fingers, feeling every sensation as you do... When ready, roll to your side.

Chapter 7. References, Resources, Bibliography, Appendix & Glossary



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## Chapter 7. References, Resources, Bibliography, Appendix & Glossary

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## Resources

### Music For Yoga Nidra

*Yogitunes.com for performance rights music*

*Nada Himalaya, Deuter*

*Tibet Nada Himalaya, Deuter*

*Xumantra, Singing Bowls*

*Wavepool, Robert Rand*

*Anugama (musician)*

### Music for Yoga Postures Practice

*Deep Within, Tony Redhouse, Navajo*

*Rhythms of the Infinite; This Rhythm is Not Mine; One River, John DeKadt*

*Kerala Dream*

### Chanting

Artists: Shantala, Russil Paul, David Newman, Sean Johnson and the Wild Lotus Band, Girish, more!

### Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra CDs and MP3 Downloads

Jennifer Reis:

*Guided Relaxation Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra*

*Deep Relaxation Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra (includes Insomnia Track)*

*Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra: Short and Long Journeys for Relaxation All Day Long*

*Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra for Children (ages 4-14)*

### Guided yoga CDs and MP3 Downloads

Jennifer Reis:

*Five Element Yoga: Rejuvenation and Relaxation (all levels)*

### Websites

**Ayurveda** <http://www.amfoundation.org/ayurveda.html> [www.banyanbotanicals.com](http://www.banyanbotanicals.com)

**Yogic texts** [www.shastras.com](http://www.shastras.com) <http://satyamyogaprasad.net>

**Essential Oils** [www.floracopeia.com](http://www.floracopeia.com)

**Research** [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/) ; [www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org)

**Psychology** - Raymond Lloyd Richmond, Ph.D. [www.guidetopsychology.com/intro.htm](http://www.guidetopsychology.com/intro.htm)

### Posters

- IYT Chakra & Mudra Cards
- IYT Kleshas
- IYT Koshas
- IYT Chakra Poster
- Chakra System Poster

[www.iytyogatherapy.com](http://www.iytyogatherapy.com) and [www.yogalifestyle.com](http://www.yogalifestyle.com) have these posters.

## HOW TO HELP STUDENTS COPE WITH TRAUMA REACTIONS

By CarmenLeah Ascencio, LCSW, MPH, Kripalu RYT, Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra Guide

### Things to remember when working with trauma survivors in Divine Sleep® Yoga Nidra:

1. Students who come to your class will most likely have a general idea of what the yoga nidra practice entails and be ready to do guided meditation. Through this self-selection process it is likely that you will have students who know how to cope with trauma reactions that may arise in meditation. Yet if a student is triggered and is unable to cope themselves, you can use the below guidelines to support someone who is triggered in class.
2. Yoga can be used as a tool to help someone ground if they are triggered during practice. If you teach yoga you already have the foundational skills to help someone cope with a trauma reaction in your class. The below guidelines can help you apply yoga skills to support survivors of trauma.
3. The following are general guidelines and are not meant to substitute professional mental health support. You should not explicitly advertise to teach yoga nidra to people with post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health issues unless you are trained to do so.

### WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS TRIGGERED IN PRACTICE?

**MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO: Keep the person in the PRESENT!** Traumatic symptoms are about re-experiencing past traumatic event/s and/or experiencing fear and anxiety about what could happen in the future. Crisis response for survivors of trauma with acute symptoms is about keeping someone in the present through grounding skills, containment and meeting people's concrete immediate needs.

#### 1) Grounding Techniques (Helpful for dissociation, re-experiencing symptoms and anxiety)

Grounding techniques are simple strategies to help:

- Stay in the present, return from a flashback
- Reduce "spaceyness"
- Deal with anxiety
- Reduce physical and emotional dysregulation
- Return to the space where students can engage in problem solving and planning

#### **Mental Grounding Techniques:**

- a. Remind the student that they are here with you now and not in the past or future. Tell them what day it is, what time it is and that they are with you, here now. Ask them to repeat this to you. This activity is not about figuring out if the student knows where they are. It is about bringing the student to the present, when their nervous system is feeling experiences from the past or worrying about the future.
- b. Ask the student to say to themselves things like, "I am in the present", "I can handle this", "I am in control right now", "This feeling will pass".
- c. Have student name three things that they can see, smell, hear, and feel.

d. Ask the student to describe in detail a safe place or person to you (i.e. look like, feel like, smell like, etc. – same thing you do when guiding the “inner sanctuary” practice. In this version the student can tell you the details out loud).

e. Tell the student to look around the room and notice colors, people, the shapes and sizes of things and to describe them out loud if necessary. I.e. “I am here in this room. The walls are grey, the floor is white, there are signs for groups on the walls, the chair is smooth, my seat is cold”, etc.

### Physical Grounding Techniques

- Have the student stamp their feet on the ground or press their feet into the floor focusing on the sensation of being rooted in on the ground.
- Have student feel their hands, squeeze their fists, wiggle their toes, describe how their body feels (if they can feel their body).
- h. If the student seems to have lost touch with themselves (i.e. cannot feel their body), have the student feel and massage their own body. Give them a blanket to wrap around themselves to feel the boundary of their own body.

### Use Senses:

- Have something for the student to smell like fruit or essential oil.
- Give the student a cold cup of water. Engaging the senses brings people to the present and lots of water helps flush adrenaline from the system.
- Have objects for students to hold such as silly putty or a rock. Have them squeeze the object and describe how it feels. You can have them do this with any object including chairs.

## 2) Breathing (Helpful for anxiety and fear)

**a. Deep belly breathing:** Have the client place their hand on their lower belly and take slow deep breaths through the nostrils so that their hands gets pushed out when they inhale and then fall into their contracting stomach when they exhale. See if they can make their exhale longer than their inhale. If the student is very acute count their breaths with them (i.e. say, “inhale, one, two, three, exhale, one, two, three, four”). The exhale should being slightly longer than the inhale.

**b. Left nostril breathing:** Cover the right nostril and breathe deeply in the same manner as previously stated only through the left nostril. In Eastern Medicine the left side is the yin (cooling, feminine) side and breathing through this side only is calming to the nervous system.

## 3) Containment

Containment is used for clients who are “spilling”. Spilling is when people narrate the details of their trauma experience without control of their expression. If someone is “spilling” they usually become more aroused while telling you their story and seem unable to regulate their emotional response (i.e. return to being calm). Containing is an essential technique to implement with students who are spilling. Although you might feel bad about stopping a student from sharing information about their experience with you, it is generally not helpful for students to share the details of their trauma with you – especially outside of the context of therapy. Re-telling details of the traumatic experience often causes people to become increasingly anxious, aroused and emotionally dysregulated. It is NOT helpful to let them go on telling you about the details of

what happened to them if it is not necessary for your work with them. Only gather details of someone's traumatic experience if it is necessary for treatment.

**When a student begins to "spill", you can:**

- a. Show that you are listening by looking at them and nodding.
  
- b. Pause the student from talking by validating what they are saying and bring the discussion back to the present moment. You may have to explicitly interrupt them as they may not leave pauses in their communication. For example, you can say something like (in your own words): "Thank you for sharing this with me. What you are talking about is very important, yet I am noticing that while you are talking about this you seem to be getting (insert emotion you are witnessing, i.e. anxious), which of course makes sense. I think it might not be helpful for you to talk about this in detail right now because our time is so short and addressing the impact of what has happened to you needs time. I do want to support you with this. Would you be open to a possible referral for more support around this?"
  
- c. You can then ask the student if they want a cup of water and let them know you will give them resources before they leave the office.

**4) Focus on concrete information, needs, services and actions**

Make a referral for counseling or case management if they are interested. Suggest that counseling is something that many trauma survivors find helpful. Tell them that counseling helps:

- Normalize his or her feelings (i.e. helps them know that they are "not crazy")
- Offers neutral, non-judgmental place to reflect on and understand their traumatic experience
- Increases coping skills to deal with traumatic symptoms

**5) Make an immediate self-care plan**

- a. Ask them what they are going to do when they leave the class to take care of themselves and stay in the present moment. (i.e. "I am going to listen to my favorite band, call my best friend and then go home to do my laundry and watch a movie".). Even talking through their next steps for the day helps people feel more in control, which is essential when their emotions feel out of their control. Keep the focus on taking care of themselves. Validate that coming forward or talking about their experience was hard work and that they deserve to do something nice for themselves afterwards (even if that is a very small thing).
  
- b. Help remind students that they only have to plan for today. Tomorrow is another day and they can focus on the things they need tomorrow when tomorrow comes.

## POWER OF THE PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

*Robin Sands, abridged article from The Relaxation Reflex by Robin Sands, Management Books, 2002. Printed here with permission from Robin Sands. [dynamicsofwellbeing.com](http://dynamicsofwellbeing.com) for e-book.*

The most important point to remember about stress is that it is literally a nervous reaction. It occurs within the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). The ANS is a vast network of nerves branching out from the spinal cord, reaching and directly affecting every organ in the body. It is responsible for maintaining the equilibrium of our internal environment. In fact, it is responsible for anything and everything that we experience automatically. The sexual urge, as well as the pleasure of its gratification, is manufactured within the ANS. The surge of determination, or dread, when faced with a threatening situation comes from the ANS, as well as the feeling of peaceful contentment that some people are fortunate enough to experience. If you feel it, you feel it with the ANS. All instinctual reactions, such as hunger and sleep, have their home here. Anything commonly called human is likely to have its roots in the ANS. Anything that is universally felt, or known, comes from this place. But, as we are about to see, the ANS is a double-edged sword.

The ANS divides into two distinct systems: the 'Sympathetic' Nervous System and the 'Parasympathetic' Nervous System. To put their functions simply, read 'stressed-out' and 'chilled-out' respectively. Often, nerve fibres from these two systems supply the same organ, one stimulating and the other sedating. They tend to be mutually exclusive since one system is concerned with the mobilization of forces to meet an emergency (the famous 'fight or flight' response) while the other is to do with the relaxed, regenerative states.

Thus, in a healthy organism we have these two branches of the ANS maintaining a Yin-and-Yang-type balance. The Sympathetic Nervous System allows us to deal with stressful situations. Whenever we perceive danger it will tense our musculature, constrict our blood vessels and speed up our thinking process, amongst numerous other activities. Then, after the danger has passed, the Parasympathetic Nervous System will take over, decreasing heartbeat, relaxing blood vessels and clearing away metabolic waste products such as adrenaline and lactic acid. This is how it should happen: action followed by relaxation; the tide of life ebbing and flowing, expanding and contracting within the ANS.

Health and vitality are the natural result of the harmonic interchange between the Sympathetic and the Parasympathetic. Unfortunately, in our world this tends to be the exception rather than the rule. In this culture, with all its inherent struggles and strains, people's Sympathetic systems very often stay on guard, unable to give in to the softer, more gentle flows of the Parasympathetic. And if this condition becomes chronic, it can lead to a whole variety of stress-related symptoms and, later, illnesses.

The ANS becomes disturbed and out-of-balance whenever the instinctual response to any situation is denied, be it ignoring our tiredness or overriding our rage. The word instinctual implies something that is automatic, even unconscious. Often we do not have time to work it out, and sometimes it defies analysis. It is simply the way in which we have reacted to this situation. The way we feel is part of our nature, and we can do ourselves a great disservice by

riding roughshod over it too often. We need to remember that we are more than just a conscious choice. We all have a depth of feeling, individual needs, tolerances and preferences. We have the ability for gut feelings as well as analysis. We have a heart as well as a head. For there to be true health there must be a healthy respect for both.

A vivid example of a healthy nervous system can be seen in a cat when it comes face to face with a dog. Immediately the Sympathetic goes on red alert. The whole of its body is mobilized in a fraction of a second. Its fur stands on end, it spreads and straightens its legs, it hisses violently and holds the impulse to scratch the dog's eyes out until just the right moment. If the dog has enough sense, it sees the futility of a fight and trots off. With amazing speed the cat then finds somewhere to stretch out and starts licking its fur. The Parasympathetic is now taking over.

For many people the business world is something of a war zone. A place where dogs eat dogs, and sharks rule the waves. A competitive environment where only the financially fittest survive. This is the jungle that we find ourselves in, trying to sidestep the booby traps and dodge the arrows of misfortune. It is not as powerful a stimulant as war, but in the long run it is equally dangerous. There are an abundance of businessmen who can never really afford to let their guard down, who never really have the time or ability to relax. They have their indigestions, their bad backs, their heart conditions, but 'when needs must, the devil drives' they tell themselves. Sadly, it is not so much the devil as their own over-active Sympathetic Nervous System that is driving them straight down the fast lane to an early grave. They do not see in their own tics, sleepless nights, stomach knots, palpitations and cold sweating a call to slow down, to take it easy. In their high-flying and sophisticated ways they do not see the simple truth that for a man to work well he must rest well. They do not seem to realize that health requires balance, harmony and equilibrium between body and mind.

The inner life of the body cannot be controlled, it can only be encouraged. If you continually try and make your body do what it doesn't want to do, it will rebel like a slave-uprising. Many people believe, for example, that the common cold is Nature's (or the ANS's) way of slowing us down and releasing accumulated toxins. This would certainly explain why many people feel better than ever after recovering from an illness.

When people are ruled by their Sympathetic Nervous Systems life slowly becomes more and more uncomfortable. It is imperceptible at first because all they are aware of is the hardship and the oppressive situation, or the thrill and the adrenaline rush. Over time, if the Sympathetic has the perpetual upper hand, it will slowly become more and more difficult to relax and give in to the Parasympathetic. Once caught in this vicious circle, sleep and appetite become affected. Alcohol and other kinds of suppressants may be sought in a vain attempt to give the sufferer an imitation of what their own Parasympathetic is waiting to give them. Later on, backache may appear, or migraine, repetitive strain injury or peptic ulcer. The list goes on and on, and does not include the different types of mental illness that can result from this unfortunate situation.

To the extent that the Sympathetic is dominant, life will seem to lose its expansive quality. Things will feel tighter, harder, more constricted. Alternatively, life may feel dangerously dramatic, explosive, despairing. Either way the various anxiety states will be felt all too keenly.

These can be experienced as numbness, palpitations, stomach knots or less easily definable but equally unpleasant sensations. These are all signs that the switch to the Sympathetic Nervous System has got stuck. If stress is continually layered on top of this block, emotional and digestive disorders can develop. The ANS is out of balance, and therefore is in a weakened state. It no longer has the ability to do its job properly. A crowbar has been jammed between the cogs of its engine. Toxins are not being cleared away, internal combustion has been affected and pressure is building up. No wonder stress can make us have fantasies about escape and suicidal feelings. They are no different to thinking about lifeboats when on a sinking ship.

If we continue to hold on after the Sympathetic has been activated, and after the danger has passed, the Parasympathetic will be unable to take control and restore peace of mind and well-being. This, regrettably, is the norm. We humans are not blessed with the simple life of cats. It is quite common for us to lay awake at night in a silent Sympathetic frenzy worrying about money or the state of our relationship.

If, for whatever reason, the Parasympathetic is unable to take over, slowly there becomes a build-up of toxins and stress by-products trapped within the system. The muscles become ever more tense and contracted. This not only happens to the six hundred and twenty skeletal muscles, but also to the smooth musculature that can be found throughout the vast network of tubes within the body systems. The blood vessels as well as the intestines all go into a state of contraction when the Sympathetic is in control. If, however, the Parasympathetic is able to take over, the gateway to another world is opened.

Let's travel gently into the realms of the Parasympathetic: the home of all relaxing, warm and contented feelings. If the Sympathetic is what we need to be in the world, then the Parasympathetic is what we need to be in Heaven. When it is in control it immediately begins to manufacture a sense of well-being. It brings peace where there was conflict. Like Mother Nature nourishing Her offspring, the Parasympathetic does everything in its power to restore harmony and equilibrium. As it relaxes muscles, blood vessels and internal organs, so the flow of all body fluids becomes easier, smoother, fuller. The intestines expand and the peristalsis (those gurgles of digestion) begins to process the waste products that the Sympathetic has created.

It slows the heartbeat and deepens and softens breathing. It calms and changes the brain's waves and patterns, bringing the quieter, more expansive states of mind that are so conducive to imagination and creative thinking. Slowly, under the right conditions, the Parasympathetic ensures that everything falls or clicks back into place. Everywhere that has been overstretched gets pulled back into line. Everything that has been contracted, begins to expand. And this expansion is experienced as pleasure. A really good night's sleep is a perfect example. As unusual as it might be for most of us, waking up feeling refreshed from a thoroughly pleasant night's sleep is solely the work of the Parasympathetic.

We move into the Parasympathetic when we have relinquished control, and when the Sympathetic has finished its job, i.e., when we have expended all that energy by fighting or by running as fast as our legs will carry us. However, if we have used up some of the energy, and

we are not too stressed-out, the Parasympathetic will do its job while we are watching TV or sleeping.

If you imagine the ANS as an ocean, then the Sympathetic would be the waves, the tides, the storms; while the Parasympathetic would be the ocean's depths, its stillness, its abundance. It is always the power of the Parasympathetic that restores calm to the surface, harmony to the mad ups-and-downs of life. And it is imperative for our survival, let alone our happiness, that we learn to awaken and develop this great healer within.

All holistic therapies aim at strengthening the Parasympathetic. There is an army of professional people out there whose purpose is to awaken this all-too-often dormant part of us. The Cranio-sacral Therapist, with great sensitivity, works directly at unwinding the deep tensions that keep the ANS out-of-balance. The Homeopath, with her potent little pills, also seeks to restore harmony within the ANS. If there is an emotional block, the Holistic Psychotherapist works at identifying and resolving the buried conflict within the ANS. The Biodynamic Massage Therapist, with great flexibility, uses whatever technique is appropriate to harmonize the ANS. Acupuncture, Shiatsu and most forms of quality massage also have similar effects on the Autonomic Nervous System.

It is this same system that yogis seek to purify and manipulate. Pranayama, a higher branch of Hatha Yoga, is a good example. It has as its goal union with God through breath control. Using highly sophisticated techniques and incredible discipline, devotees work toward strengthening and developing their Parasympathetics to such an extraordinary degree that all the systems and senses of the body become saturated with vitality and well-being. The true potential of the brain is thus harnessed, and consciousness takes several leaps beyond our imagination.

Of course, most of us aren't ready for such spiritual acrobatics. We just want to feel happier and more relaxed; less easily wound-up, less given to worry and more optimistically inclined. Most of us would like to trust in the process of life a little more.

In fact, most of us are looking for a way to relax and be happy, without giving up any of our pleasures and without putting too much effort into it. Fortunately, this is the optimum way to proceed. The Parasympathetic does not respond to denial, or to efforting. Like an abused child cowering under the bed, it needs to be coaxed out of its hiding place. It needs soft words and gentle assurances; a little bit at a time so it is not overwhelmed. It requires the most patient determination. Whatever New Age claims you may have heard, it is only through the regular and consistent practice of relaxation that the Parasympathetic can be brought back to its former glory.

As a culture we have systematically trained ourselves to override the ANS, our instinctual life, in favour of a faster, more "convenient" lifestyle. Unlike the bristling, hissing cat, not many of us give full vent to the Sympathetic. As a race, we tend to be a little frightened of our instinctual reactions. We do not enjoy our heart racing, our hair standing on end, our legs trembling, and so we tend to tense against such disturbing sensations. This often makes us feel in control, and gives the illusion of security. But we are cutting off our nose to spite our face. If the ANS is inhibited, it will inevitably get stuck in its mode of operation. This does not imply that we should

become like animals or small children. It simply means that, in the interest of our health on all levels, we should respect our feelings.

Our conscious mind, or head, should be able to overrule the ANS, or heart, because it is not always wise to do exactly what we feel like doing. And this process works fine, so long as the control exerted is relaxed after the stressful situation has passed. The problem comes when this does not occur. When we continue to hold on and to disallow the ANS its natural functioning, stress is the not-so-natural result. When the Sympathetic is activated it produces a lot of energy which is designed either for fighting the threat i.e., standing up for ourselves, or for running away from it. It is an animal or instinctual response, and it doesn't matter how rational or intellectual we become, we cannot change the reality of this fact.

Yet how can the natural desire to sleep be honoured when we have to work all the hours God sent and then spend half the night up with the kids? How can we surrender to our bowel movements when there is a long queue in front of the toilet? How can we express the anger and irritation we feel toward our boss when we know it will be cutting off the hand that feeds us? We cannot, and we are not supposed to. Our will power is there for just such emergencies. The healthy use of it is called 'deferred gratification'. It allows us to hold on to the impulse until we find an appropriate place to express it.

It is a gift to have the ability to control the life that is flowing through us. Stress is the abuse of this gift.

**Facing emotional turmoil: yoga and science explore skillful ways to navigate the turbulent after effects of a broken heart. BY ANGELA WILSON Reprinted with permission: Yoga International, summer 2012.**

*I'm sitting in the Kripalu dining hall for early morning silent breakfast. I have just had the last of my kitchari and am about to dive into my walnut-maple scone when I see them: my ex and a woman who is obviously his new love interest, sitting there together across the dining room—he gazing starry-eyed at her long dark hair, she sending flirtatious glances across the table to him. They seem to be on a silent second date. Immediately my heart starts to pound. Adrenaline shoots through my veins like tiny rushing rivers; my mind races. Everything else seems to have stopped.*

Miraculously amid this whirlwind, I remember to practice. I somehow manage to find the observing ego (what we call “the witness”) in this yoga romance gone awry. I notice that my mouth is dry, and my hands are beginning to shake. My breath seems to stop altogether. My vision has become tunnel-like. I am aware that even though I should probably pull my attention away from the pair, pick up my tray, and leave the room, I seem anchored to the chair as if made of cement. All I can do is continue to shift my focus between them and my plate and back again. My heart continues to beat so loudly I wonder, for a moment, if I might have a heart attack. I think I might cry. Or scream. Or hurl my scone at them like a hockey puck.

I'm apparently in the throes of what researchers call an emotionally dysregulated state, a classic example of what emotion regulation expert James Gross, PhD, from Stanford University's Psychology Department defines as the inability to “influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them.” Yoga has long been interested in skillful ways to navigate the emotional realm, a topic Western science has been a bit slower to explore. But given the undisputed evidence of emotional dysfunction in our culture—19 million Americans suffer from depression; another 40 million from anxiety; 23 million abuse substances; and 93 million are obese—researchers no longer feel they can ignore the topic. They now argue that most of our major mental, physical, political, and cultural problems stem (at least in part) from our inability to get a handle on our emotions. In the midst of our modern high-speed external world, we seem to have lost the ability to regulate our *internal* one.

While scientists have studied at least 10 different ways we typically regulate our emotions, they gravitate toward three in particular: suppression, distraction, and reappraisal, each of which can move us toward health and insight or toward disease and more suffering. As I went through my

own experience, I became achingly familiar with each of these strategies as I tried to manage the feelings engendered by my ex falling in love with someone else.

#### Suppression

One month later. I walk toward the dining hall eager to pile my lunch plate with kale and mung dahl. As I enter the dining hall, I look up. Oh no, there they are! My heart starts to race and I can't tear my gaze from them. For a moment they look at me as well, and all three of us do the uncomfortable foot shuffle. I try to breathe (where is my breath?) but my belly is so tight, I can barely manage it. They turn away, and as they do, my ex softly places his hand on his new lover's shoulder, and they continue to walk down the lunch line.

Instantly a wave of rage floods my system. I am shocked that I can actually feel this much energy all at once—shocked that a simple gesture can have such a powerful impact. My whole body feels like someone just pumped it with a high voltage electrical charger. I want to scream, throw my tray up in the air, and run out of the dining hall. I'm astonished by these feelings. I am also aware that, as a yoga teacher, a mental health counselor, and a usually kind human being, this is probably not the

most skillful action. I don't know what to do with emotion this intense. So I shut it down. I can almost feel myself stuffing the feelings back into whatever box they erupted from. The result seems better. I can no longer feel the intensity of the anger. But I can't quite say I feel at ease or comfortable either. I feel a bit like I just took a huge bite of steak, didn't chew it well enough, and swallowed it whole. This feeling of undigested food is the feeling of suppression, of not digesting experience.

When it comes to studying emotional regulation, scientists most often choose to investigate suppression, not because it's the most effective tool—in fact, it's quite detrimental to one's physical and mental health—but because so many people use it as their primary strategy. Denying your feelings and disowning them become synonymous with managing your emotions. *I'm not upset. No really, I'm fine.* The problem is—and famed dancer-choreographer Martha Graham said it best—“the body never lies.” We might succeed in pushing a feeling out of our minds, but we cannot push it out of our bodies. Our bodies know whether or not we have truly processed an experience.

Iris Mauss, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of Denver, and Dr. Gross contend that “if

emotions are denied expression, they will leak out elsewhere—for example, as increased physiological response.” To test this idea, Mauss and Gross ran a study investigating how people handle their emotions when faced with something unpleasant.

They invited a group of participants to watch a “disgusting” video (imagine a graphic, bloody, organ-exposing operation). Half of the group was asked to suppress their feelings (not show any outward signs of disgust) and the other half was asked to feel and express their emotions as usual. The result? Those who suppressed their emotions reported feeling less disgusted than the other group, but their sympathetic response increased. Translation? While suppressors said they felt fine, their bodies disagreed and signaled a stress response.

Researchers went on to replicate this finding not only with difficult emotions, such as disgust, but also with pleasant emotions, such as joy. The results are clear. Whatever we suppress (bad or good) taxes our nervous system and actually makes things worse. My experience in the dining hall bore this out. I felt no anger or sorrow, but plenty of numbness and disconnection.

INSTEAD OF USING DISTRACTION TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE PAIN, YOGA ENCOURAGES US TO TURN TOWARD IT—TO SEE IT, FEEL IT FULLY, AND ULTIMATELY, TO UNDERSTAND IT.

My digestion became weak and I didn't sleep well. Stuffing down feelings ultimately drains life force and diminishes well-being.

### Distraction

Two months later. I am still riding some pretty serious waves as I watch my ex and his girlfriend in the halls together. So I switch tactics and decide to find something to distract me from my emotions. Instead of looking at the starry-eyed couple when they pass by, I become fascinated with how many chairs are in the café (33, as it turns out), counting them as I go. The feelings still arise—I'm not trying to suppress what comes up—but I shift my attention to other aspects of experience, such as the color of the wallpaper, for instance. It's a speckled brown. Surprisingly, this works. I don't feel quite as triggered when I see them, and I'm not left feeling as emotionally undigested. But still, each time our paths cross, I experience the same

discomfort, and I remain ever vigilant to the possibility of running into them.

Apparently this distraction trick I've been using is what emotion regulation researchers call attentional deployment, which Gross defines as “how individuals direct their attention within a given situation in order to influence their emotions.” Studies, which include subsequent brain scans of participants, attest to the fact that focusing attention away from the unpleasant diminishes its intensity. For me, that meant less attention on the happy couple and more attention on the colors in the carpet. It is easy to see why mainstream culture favors this particular technique. In our media-saturated environment, we need not go far to find something else to pay attention to other than the pain. Lonely? Jump on Facebook. Sad? Twitter away. Anxious? Turn on the TV. Countless ways exist to distract ourselves. In certain

cases, such as physical pain, many psychologists argue that this can be a skillful technique.

Neuroscientific research has demonstrated that distraction diminishes limbic (primitive and emotional) responding more than other forms of regulation, making it a beneficial treatment for trauma victims. Trauma therapists encourage their clients to focus not on the intense physical sensations of a flashback but on the minutia of their immediate environment: they may ask them to look around, for example, and name all the green objects in the room. On the other hand, it's hard not to see the limitations of this method. At some point we run out of Facebook postings to read, and we can only blog and tweet so much. Eventually we have to turn the computer or the TV off and come face to face with whatever feelings drove us to distraction in the first place—and then what? We're up the proverbial emotional creek without a paddle.

Yogis have long been aware of this distraction technique, but they use it differently. Their instructions: focus on the breath to the exclusion of other stimuli. In the purest sense, this *is* attentional distraction as well as the foundational first step toward liberation. The main difference between the Western approach and the yogic one lies in the object itself. In order to gain the most benefit from this method, the object needs to diminish disturbance, not create more of it. As Satya Narayana Dasa, founder of the Jiva Institute of Vedic Studies, writes: "Remove disturbance, then there is peace; peace is always present and can't be created. We can only remove disturbance; then the mind is naturally peaceful."

Intentionally choosing a peaceful object of focus will help foster mental and physical stability, calm the nervous system, and produce greater ease. In *The Wisdom of Yoga*, Stephen Cope explains that "as attention holds the object, it becomes very one-pointed. Distracting thoughts are blocked out by the onepointedness, and mental restlessness abates. This [process] produces a slowing of the brain waves, a calming of the nervous system and the breath, and often the sense of bliss, well-being, and happiness."

Yogis usually view this technique as a beginning, not as the end result. Yoga teaches us to develop

concentration through the breath so that we can then turn this cultivated attention to the mind itself. Instead of using distraction to move away from the pain, yoga encourages us to turn toward it—to see it, feel it fully, and ultimately, to understand it. In doing so, we learn we no longer have to fear pain or push it away. Yoga gives us the tools to manage the experience on its own terms.

### Reappraisal

Three months later. I enter a vigorous yoga class ready to practice. With mat set up, I settle in and wait for class to start. As I come into my first down dog I notice the dreaded girlfriend behind me. My body tightens, and I want to flee. Then I remember the words of many of my own yoga teachers: "Just stay with experience. Watch and observe. Do not identify with the story but embrace the sensation." I begin to let go of control and just *feel*. Immediately I'm flooded with a huge wave of grief. I suddenly want to cry. A deep sense of inadequacy mixed with shame arises. My belly feels hot and tight. I commit to allowing the feelings to happen, but not wanting to disrupt the group, I leave the class and go into the bathroom. Tears erupt, sobs, shaking. My mind races, but I simply notice the thoughts as thoughts, not real. I whisper yes to what arises. I no longer fear it. My torso is pulsing; my whole body feels like it's on fire. Emotions rip through me: loneliness, regret, and sorrow. I sob for what seems like an hour and pray that no one comes in to see the puddles of tears at my feet. Finally, after some time, the waves pass, and a deep sense of quiet fills me. I sit in a kind of stillness I have not felt before. The room itself feels different. *I feel different. Steadier.*

Peaceful. Balanced. And tender in the sweetest way. That night I eat with fervor, and I sleep deeply and soundly.

What contributed to this shift? What is it about this process that is profoundly different from the other two approaches I tried? Two major differences are worth noting. First, I'm able to access the witness—my observing ego—which allows me to experience what arises without preference or judgment and without getting swept away. I begin to understand that all experiences, even the painful ones, are safe to feel. As Stephen Cope writes in response to his own discovery: "I realized that for the first time I really knew—knew in the deepest part of my mind—that I do *not* have to bend life to my will. I

could let go of the need to dominate things, and watch how they unfold instead.”

It is through embracing the experience that emotions begin to regulate themselves. Science doesn't say much about this concept of embracing, but the available research is striking. In one study, subjects were asked to watch images of people expressing unpleasant emotions. Researchers wanted to know whether focusing on the emotion would produce more regulated states. They had the subjects look at unpleasant faces (those displaying anger or fear). Part of the group was asked to focus and name the facial emotion; the other group was asked to focus and name the person's gender. The results? Brain imaging and self-report outcomes showed that gazing directly at and naming the facial emotion, even when unpleasant, diminished reactivity in the subjects; that is, they experienced less distress than the other subjects. While this outcome puzzled scientists, yoga practitioners get it: This is the witness. The witness gazes directly at and names what is present.

Looking back on my experience, aligning with the witness—and not with the ever-changing flow of thoughts, sensations, and emotions—allowed me to embrace a different orientation to life. Everything was, in fact, okay, including this muddy, murky, tornado mess that was swirling inside. This change in view—in my particular case, from experience as unmanageable to experience as fully acceptable—is a process scientists call reappraisal. Reappraisal means changing the way you understand a situation so that it changes your emotional response to that situation.

Without realizing it, I had seen my reaction to my ex as the problem, so I had resisted. *I shouldn't be so attached to this person. I should be more loving to them. I should be happy for them!* When that intention crumbled, self-judgment took its place. The frame of “should” had actually kept me locked in struggle. Finally, I got it. Be present to whatever is arising. Naming mental and physical experiences as part of the natural ebb and flow of being human produced a shift in my orientation to the experience itself. I went from thinking there was something wrong with my experience to understanding that I simply needed to show up and witness what was happening. And that shift helped me regulate my emotions.

Scientists report reappraisal as the most effective regulatory technique because, through practice, it does not take conscious effort to employ. Additionally, it comes with a variety of health benefits, such as improved cognition and heightened immune response, diminished limbic activity (primitive emotional responding), and increased cortical activity (the brain region associated with discernment). Studies show that the elderly make great reappraisers because they've lived long enough to know not to take things personally. They interpret situations through a broader lens instead of a “me centered” lens. Someone passes you in the hall and doesn't say hello? You are more likely, as an older adult, to interpret that behavior not as a snub but as a reflection of the busyness of the other person's life. This shift in viewpoint produces less reactivity. How do we reap the benefits of reappraisal at any age? Researchers may still puzzle over this question, but yoga is one step ahead of them. Simply put, yoga teaches us to pay attention and to cultivate the ability to observe life exactly as it arises without the need to change it.

The witness mind enables the experience to speak to us—as opposed to us trying to exert our will onto the experience. The process of watching the experience itself produces change. There is nothing we need to do. We simply need to have the courage to notice and allow experience to flow through us. In *Yoga for a World out of Balance*, Michael Stone writes, “In meditative practice, when the mind becomes still without adding anything to experience and without trying to escape from that particular moment, there is a still and lucid clarity that is nothing other than pure awareness....”

This is the flow of humanness, where, even momentarily, we wake up to what is real and true in a given moment, by means of stillness.” I still see my ex's girlfriend from time to time. And to be honest, I still react. But I no longer think there is something wrong with this experience. Now, I simply just note it—*oh yes, you again*—and then I move on with my day. I don't get so caught up in it. Maybe at some point I will be completely free of the unpleasant thoughts and emotions, but maybe not. Perhaps real freedom comes from being totally okay with whatever inner conditions emerge, rather than total freedom from all unpleasant experience.

Maybe we are all closer to inner freedom than we imagine.

*I WENT FROM THINKING THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY EXPERIENCE TO UNDERSTANDING THAT I SIMPLY NEEDED TO SHOW UP AND WITNESS WHAT WAS HAPPENING.*

### CONNECT WITH YOUR WITNESS MIND

A simple practice like BRFWA (breathe, relax, feel, watch, allow) can help you be present with your experience even as it gets intense. Use this technique on your yoga mat and in your daily life. Whenever your emotions threaten to derail you, these simple steps can bring you back into balance.

#### BREATHE

- Notice the natural rise and fall of breath through your body.
- Begin to take several deep breaths.
- Let the breath call up your witness.

#### RELAX

- Relax the body.
- Soften the belly, the brow muscle across the forehead, any tension in the jaw.
- Resist the impulse to control or push away the sensation.

#### FEEL

- Actively move your awareness toward the sensations and feelings in your body.
- Stay with a feeling. How does it feel now...and now?
- Notice any judgment or evaluation of the feeling and let it go. Simply stay with the sensation.

#### WATCH

- Witness your experience without judgment.
- Notice how the mind reacts to the experience.
- Let go of the story about this experience.
- Coach yourself to stay with your experience—breathe, relax, and feel.

#### ALLOW

- Allow your experience to unfold just as it is.
- Surrender to your experience without trying to understand it.
- Let your experience happen.
- Say yes to this moment.

## Glossary

**Abhinivesha:** Klesha meaning Fear, stubbornness, insecurity, anxiety for what is to come; fear of death.

**Ahamkara:** the storyteller and “I”-maker, “thinking mind”, conscious, ego-self, rational, logical, and intellectualizing state

**Asana:** Posture of the physical body and the posture we hold in relation to life, is felt most distinctly in the Body Scan stage. ‘Stirasukhamasanam’ sutra 2.46, is perhaps the most quoted sutra by Western yogis and yoginis, as it is the only one in the whole book that makes reference to the body or asana. It means ‘Posture must have the dual qualities of alertness and relaxation’ (Desikachar, 180). This describes completely the Body Scan in Yoga Nidra.

**Asmita:** Klesha meaning ‘I’ awareness, ego and egoism, imagining that I am the center of the world.

**Avidya:** Klesha meaning ignorance or ‘not’ understanding, misapprehension; this is the main cause of suffering that causes the other four. *Avidya* is separation from our body, mind and spiritual nature. Yoga Nidra facilitates connection on all levels and recognition that we are already whole, regardless of how we may *feel* at any particular moment, or how our senses may create division between us and the world. Yoga Nidra washes purification through all levels of our being, so that we may have true clarity of awareness.

**Awareness:** An expression of true Self, true Nature.

**Dharana:** ‘Concentration’ which is required, developed and strengthened in our Yoga Nidra practice. Counting the breath and remaining witness to opposite sensations and emotions are examples of this.

**Dhyana:** ‘Meditation’. This is a gift, a fruit of our practice, not a practice itself, and occurs throughout Yoga Nidra practice.

**Dvesha:** Klesha meaning Aversion, hate, and pushing away. “I do not want broccoli.”

**Jagrat:** Conscious mind.

**Klesha:** These are the five causes of suffering. It is rewarding to find out that it has been narrowed down to only five.

**Pranayama:** Breathing practices that channel and expand vital life force found in the Breath and Prana Awareness Stage of Yoga Nidra.

**Pratyahara:** Drawing the senses inward and away from outside disturbances, a decision to remove life’s obstacles and problems at an inner level. Yoga Nidra is the scientific process for practicing *Pratyahara* as we journey through the koshas.

**Raga:** Klesha meaning Passion, attachment, and clinging. "I want chocolate ice cream."

**Samadhi:** 'Union'. This is the complete integration of all aspects of our being as wholeness. This is the ultimate and true intention of Yoga Nidra and comes as a fruit of our practice.

**Samskara:** Habits, tendencies, grooves, or biases, in body and mind. In the relaxed state of Yoga Nidra, our *samskaras* bubble up to the surface as the natural consequence of purification. We are able to feel and observe these *samskaras* in a relaxed state without our habitual reactions. When we turn to face and feel our *samskaras*, they integrate and dissolve, creating profound changes in deep core layers of our being which makes real change possible in our inner and outer lives.

**Self:** true Self, essence, divine indwelling essence, true nature, Atman Welcomes everything in just as it is, non-judging, spacious, compassionate, loving, all-pervading, collective, presence, never rejects, all-encompassing, no separation, invitation to be just as we are; all sensation, emotion, thought, ups and downs of life all arise, unfold, and have their resolution in awareness; always present, even when unrecognized.

**Sharira:** Bodies-- **Shtula sharira:** Gross body. **Sukshma sharira:** Mind/Subtle body. **Karana Sharira:** Spirit/Causal body.

**Shushupti:** Unconscious mind.

**Subconscious mind:** conditioning, trauma, affects how we behave, passed on generation to generation.

**Swapna:** Subconscious mind.

**Unconscious mind:** Represents the sum total of conditioning of the human species, from the birth of the universe to the present day. This includes the five elements, seasons, cycles, human evolution and civilizations, spiritual practice of all major religions (like meditation or contemplation, ritual and sacrifice), family, death and cycles of life, and nature. Our unconscious works in present tense and in the language of symbolic representation.

**Witness Consciousness:** In the psychology of yoga it has always been a fundamental tool for self-development and self-understanding on the path to Self-Realization. 'Witness' implies that one is watching and observing objectively. To be witness of phenomena means that one is standing apart from the situation and *not identifying* with it. According to yogic philosophy, whatever can be witnessed by us is not our essential nature but a transient phase. This idea has been brought forth by ancient sages who described the nature of the Self as Brahman, the highest Divinity which sits in our heart as our Heart.

