

Yoga, Wellness, and Self Discovery - part 5 Yogic Sleep Relaxation

For many centuries, yogis have used the technique of yogic sleep-relaxation as a highly effective method of recharging the mind and body. During relaxation you may feel like you're asleep, but what naturally happens is that you begin to access a different level of awareness, you fall into a deeper level of consciousness. This deeper level of consciousness allows the inner intelligence of prana to move freely throughout your system, relaxing, rejuvenating and healing you on all levels – mental, emotional, and physical. The human body is designed to restore itself. We are bio-engineered to heal. Given the right circumstances and the right conditions, the body will repair itself. It is our nature to be healthy.

Because we are reactionary beings, we hold onto a lot of tension. This bodily tension affects circulation, reducing system efficiency and the body's natural ability to heal. When the body is at rest and the breath is calm, the nerves are soothed, de-stressing the body. Relaxation allows us to let go, to release that hold we have on reality both mentally and physically. Any relaxation technique; contraction and release, mantra, breath following, or guided relaxation is beneficial. Being relaxed fosters a sense of wellbeing, equanimity and peace.

After a hatha yoga session the body is in the best state to receive the beneficial effects that relaxation brings. During hatha yoga exercises the bodily systems are stimulated, irrigated and detoxified, making possible a more efficient, health restoring human system. The postures also affect the musculature system; contracting and lengthening the muscle fibers flushes the tissue with fresh oxygenated blood (the lymph system), removing toxins and waste; all of which makes practicing relaxation at the end of the class most beneficial; the perfect time for the body to heal itself naturally.

Yogic sleep-relaxation can be practiced on a daily basis; it will gradually decrease the level of tension in the body, helping to keep it supple and healthy. Yogic sleep relaxation may be practiced at any time. Whether it is in a yoga class or an at home practice, it is recommended that you stay in relaxation for a suggested minimum of 10 minutes at a time. There is no set maximum time; one may remain in relaxation for as long as one's schedule permits.

Like swimming, the true experience of deep relaxation can only be understood by jumping in and trying it. The experience will also help your ongoing awareness of your physical and mental states. You will come to recognize your potential for calm awareness, resiliency and adjustability to unexpected events or demands made upon you.

So are you ready to learn yogic sleep relaxation? The practice is called Yoga Nidra, (yogic relaxation or sleep relaxation) the actual position for relaxation is called Savasana (corpse pose).

The position is simple; you lie on your back, legs straight, with a space between your feet that's comfortable, with the legs completely relaxed. Place your arms alongside your body, not too close and not far away, the palms facing a comfortable direction. The right position should be very comfortable. If this position isn't comfortable at first, modify it for your body.

There are several techniques used for relaxation. Basically you need something to do while you're doing nothing. Most people like to be led through the practice; you could use a CD, a podcast or just listen to relaxing music. Some of the practices include breath following or breath awareness, contraction and release, mantra, or being guided on a healing or relaxing journey. The best way to learn relaxation is to go to a yoga class and be led by an experienced yoga teacher.

Try to practice the technique regularly, at least once a day. Soon you'll become old friends with a state that is rightfully yours: the peace and tranquility of a tension-free body and mind. Such an experience will continue to be reflected in what you think, say and do. The experience will also help your ongoing awareness of your physical and mental states. You will come to recognize your potential for calm awareness, resiliency and adjustability to unexpected events or demands made upon you.

Yoga is amazing and everyone can do it with the right teacher. Let today be the day that you become more. Find an experienced yoga teacher in your area and start taking classes right away. It will change how you live your life!

You can't do yoga and not change.

Tony Riposo
Infinite Light Yoga Director