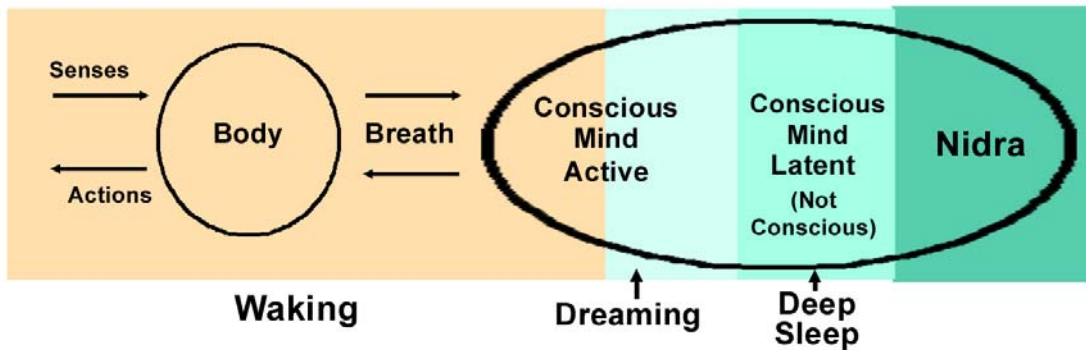


How to Practice Yoga Nidra In One Easy Lesson

Yoga Nidra is an advanced yoga practice that allows you to retain full consciousness while in a deep sleep. Yogis use it to deeply connect with their core nature, process personal issues and evoke deep relaxation and the restoration that goes with it. Once you've tapped into the Nidra state, it becomes possible to reaccess it quickly, throughout the day, so that you retain peace of mind.



Maybe the best way to describe Nidra is through what it's not. It's not:

- Lucid dreaming
- The mixed state between sleeping and waking
- Deep relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Alpha state

In Nidra, you are fully aware of your core self, the essential 'you' that is separate from your thoughts and feelings. You are not busy think, merely experiencing. The part of the mind that creates dreams, stories, fantasies, the part that worries and solves problems, is set aside. In a sense, it is a purely 'right brain' experience. The left brain, with all its sense of structure is allowed to quietly rest.

Nidra can be elusive, even for the experienced yogi. To experience it, we set up all the conditions to allow it to happen and then simply wait. It might happen fleetingly at first. Then, with practice, those fleeting moments become longer, more under our control. We become more and more able to induce this state at will. Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati said it best in his Nidra article on Swami.com: "The state comes after the methods."

Overview of the Method

For Nidra, you will relax yourself progressively, from your outer body down into your inner body, then down into your mental layers. You then linger in the

experience of your core self, separate from your thoughts and feelings, and wait. Easily said, (for the writer LOL), but how do you do this? That's what this article is to help you do.

Laying the Ground Work

You will need to be adept at several yoga practices first. These are laid out in the order that you will need to master them.

Better Breathing

In preparation for Core Breathing, (further down), be sure to include breathing practice near the end of each of your yoga sessions. Start with mastering Abdominal Breathing, then the different Chest Breathing exercises, then The Wave. Do your breathing practice after your poses and before your relaxation and meditation.

Meditations

Certain meditations will give you two skills you're going to need for Nidra: knowing yourself as separate from your body, mind or emotions; being able to hold a mental-emotional state.

- At the end of your yoga sessions, be sure to incorporate time for meditation. Start with 3 minutes and, as you become easily able to manage that, build up, a minute at a time.
- At first, simply practice the Basic Meditation: Following Your Breathing.
- As you progress to Yellow and Green Level, alternate the meditation you use in your session. Some sessions, use the Basic Meditation. For others, use the meditation that simply follows sounds around you as they come and go. Hear the sound as it hits your ears. Don't think about it or analyse it but simply let the noise vibrate against your ears. Release the sound without further thought as it subsides.
- Once your practice progresses into Blue Level, (see steps below), you will change your meditation to simply sitting in the experience of your core self. (By the time you get to Blue Level, this meditation will make sense to you.)

Step-by-step Relaxation, such as the type practiced at the end of beginner yoga classes. Follow the links on this site to Breathing Theme 3. This will train you in deliberately relaxing the 'outer body', your limbs, your torso, your head, the parts that you normally think of as 'your body' and that you use throughout the day.

- Practice your yoga using Breathing Theme 3 until you can do this easily.

Deep Body Relaxation.

This is what you learn in *Serenity Yoga Green Level*. Start with visualizations like the *Sponge*, (also known as *Breathing Theme 15*). This will teach you to relax deeply throughout the inside your body, and you'll find that your mind starts to follow it into a more calm state.

- In your practice, first use *The Sponge* as your visualization at the end of your yoga sessions and as a *Yoga Snack*, until you can access the *Sponge* to instantly relax anywhere, any time you need it
- Then practice *Green Level Breathing Themes*, especially *Breathing Theme 15*, until you can let go of tensions deep inside your body, anywhere, any time you need to.

Core Breathing, also known as “Spinal Breathing” or “Spinal Circulation”. *Core Breathing* gives you greater internal awareness. It begins the journey from the body into the mind, and, so, is a bridge between them. As such, it's also very helpful in helping you establish and maintain mental states. As a bonus, it helps clear your energy body.

- By the time you reach *Yellow Level*, or certainly by *Green Level*, add *Core Breathing* practice to your yoga practice. Place it after your poses and before your relaxation and meditation.

Paced Breathing

Become comfortable with a well paced breath, so that you can easily take your time over the four stages of each breath. Your goal is to be able to linger easily in the second and fourth stages of breathing, (holding your breath after you breathe in, and pausing after you breathe out). You will need this for discovering the quiet inside yourself.

Yellow Level trains you in pacing your breathing. It also connects your breath with your body, by matching your breath with your movements in your poses. Vinyasas like *Sun Salutations* and *Moon Salutations* are ideal for this. You will need to be completely comfortable with pacing your breath while you move in your vinyasas; no huffing and puffing or gasping for extra breaths.

Then use *Green Level* to train yourself in being relaxed and soft in your breathing, even while it is well paced.

Blue Level After mastering your paced breathing, it's time to look for those quiet moments inside you. These are most easily found during the pauses in your breath, (after breathing in and after breathing out). *Blue Level* allows you to find this stillness inside. Focus on movement oriented poses and vinyasas, pacing them with your breath. The key is that, during the pauses in your breathing, your breath is also still; this allows you to ‘hover’ as everything inside you becomes very still. In time, this hovering gives you a sense of internal stillness separate

from your mental chatter and emotions. You begin to get a feeling for your Core Self.

Method to Experience Nidra

Once all the above practices come easily to you, you are ready to use them to help you experience Nidra.

Your Nidra experiences will happen more readily if you do 15 – 30 minutes of vinyasa before you start. Focus on the matching the pauses in your breathing with pauses in your movements, (Yellow Level Practice).

1. Lay in *Corpse Pose*.
2. Settle into place by noticing your breath come and go for a few minutes.
3. Pace your breath, so that each of the four stages of your breath as well established.
4. Relax your body, step by step. This brings you to an initial state of relaxation.
5. Relax more deeply using Deep Body Relaxation.
6. Move into Core Breathing. This moves you deeper into your body. Continue until you feel yourself established into a deeper state of relaxation.
7. Establish a more still mental state by lingering over the pauses in your breath. During these pauses, you might notice a sense of separation between your 'Self' and your thoughts. This is the state you're aiming for.
8. Hold *Step 7* as a meditative state. (Simply wait in meditation.) If Nidra is going to happen, it will. If not, there is always the next time.
9. Nidra will dissolve on its own. It might only last a few breaths or it can last for hours. You can also break it by simply deciding your done and going back to breathing normally.

Tips

- Don't be discouraged if it doesn't happen easily or right away. Set up the steps and just allow the events to unfold in time.
- The more you practice, the more likely you are to attain Nidra.

Other Resources

- "Yoga Nidra"; Swami Satyananda Saraswati.; 2001
- Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati on Swami.com