

What is Yoga Nidra?

Yoga Nidra (pronounced *nih-drah*) means “yogic sleep.” A comprehensive meditative practice for going far beyond deep relaxation, Yoga Nidra reliably uncovers and awakens an inner oasis of peacefulness, intuitive understanding, and unconditional joy, helping us develop valuable skills for handling stress and tension in the short term and for the long run. Finally, the practice of Yoga Nidra is based on time-honored Yoga principles and its benefits are backed by contemporary science.

Yoga Nidra is usually practiced at the end of a Yoga session and never seems to last long enough. It is done in a posture that is accessible to nearly everyone; that posture is called *shavasana*, where you lie on your back with your arms and legs out to your sides. Yoga Nidra is deeply relaxing and restorative. When you practice all the stages in sequence and regularly, clear thinking replaces worries, intuition develops, and creativity surges. Mood swings and emotional upsets balance out with greater emotional understanding and stability. Self-awareness and witness consciousness enhance.

What’s more, the good news is that you can do Yoga Nidra as a complete practice by itself and that it can last up to an hour. You will employ important techniques in a systematic order enabling you to experience profound healing for the body, mind, and spirit.

Stages of Yoga Nidra:

1. Proven relaxation skills are used to experience total physical relaxation. Your body will typically feel heavy and deeply relaxed and your mind will start quieting down.
2. Specialized breathing techniques are performed to become calm and energetically balanced. You will experience an inner stillness during this phase.
3. Techniques like guided imagery, visualization, and mindfulness are used to bring about mental and emotional relief and to help dissolve limiting beliefs. Once you reach this level, the heaviness naturally lifts and a light, buoyant feeling occurs. Why? Because you are no longer being “held down” by physical, energetic, mental, and emotional tension.
4. Our inbuilt intuition naturally reveals itself after our tensions are relieved during the previous three stages. You will feel even more lightness and genuine peace during the fourth stage. This non-mental state of being opens us up to our source of higher knowledge and wisdom.
5. The fifth stage is indescribable, because it goes beyond words and the thinking mind into the sensation of pure contentment and unconditional joy. You feel inner and outer stillness.
6. The sixth stage allows us to experience, naturally, our True Self, a place inside each of us that is always undisturbed, joyful, and wisdom-filled. This is a timeless, spacious feeling of being totally at ease yet being aware and awake—a primary goal of Yoga itself.
7. Lastly, it’s important to return to normal wakefulness and awareness at the conclusion of your Yoga Nidra practice.

These uplifting levels of consciousness are powerful. Afterwards, you will feel restored, relaxed, and your energy will be replenished, even exhilarated.

Like anything that is worthwhile doing, regular practice yields the best results. Here are some benefits of practicing Yoga Nidra as described and documented in [*Yoga Nidra for Complete Relaxation and Stress Relief*](#) by Julie Lusk. (New Harbinger Publications, 2015)

The Practice of Yoga Nidra:

- Activates the relaxation response and deactivates the stress response. This improves functioning of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems (ANS) and the endocrine system (glands and hormones).
- Improves your overall health
- Helps with insomnia. One hour of yoga nidra practice is equivalent to 4 hours of sleep.
- Increases immunity and the ability to fight germs and infections (Kumar 2007)
- Boosts cellular rejuvenation and repair
- Improves heart functioning by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol (Pandya and Kumar 2007)
- Decreases pain
- Improves control of fluctuating blood glucose and symptoms associated with diabetes (Amita et al. 2009)
- Significantly improves anxiety, depression and well-being in patients with menstrual irregularities and having psychological problems (Rani et al. 2011)
- Manages pre- and post-surgical conditions (Kumar, page 56)
- Increases energy, especially when it's needed most
- Transforms thoughts and feelings of separation into a direct experience of wholeness

For more resources on Yoga Nidra, you can listen to Julie's CD, [*Yoga Nidra: Guided Meditations for Relaxation and Renewal*](#) (Health Journeys, 2016) or read about it and get free audio downloads in her book, [*Yoga Nidra for Complete Relaxation and Stress Relief*](#) (New Harbinger, 2015).