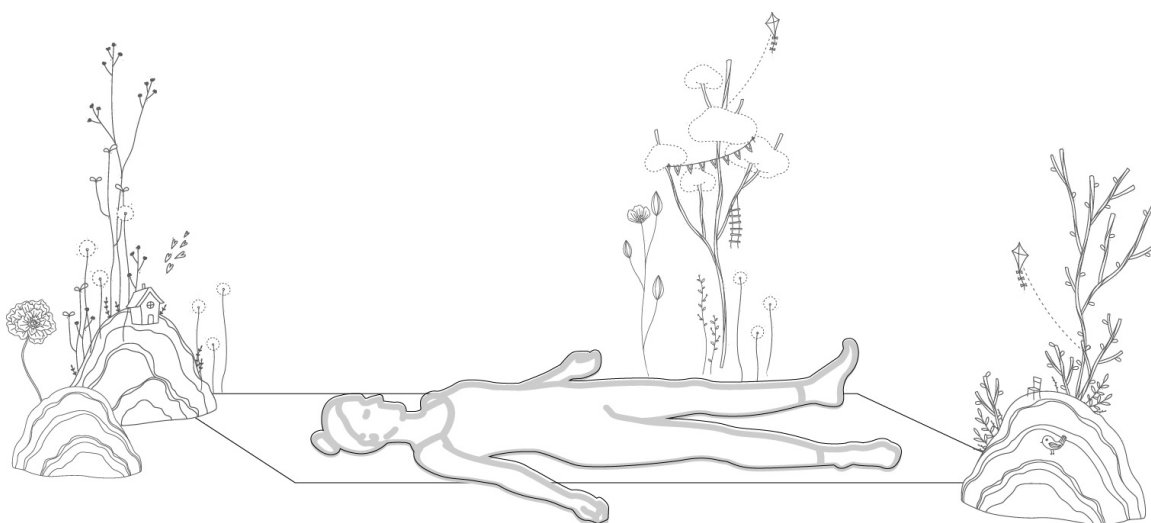


TARYN DIAMOND YOGA

YOGA NIDRĀ TRAINING MANUAL



What is education?
Teacher speaking to the student seated by their side,
Wisdom between, discourse connecting them.

~ Taittiriya Upanishad, Verse 3.3



This manual is dedicated to my teachers:
Scott Davis, Sheila Cullen and Hali Schwartz.
Thank you for inspiring meaningful rest in my life.

Written and compiled by Taryn Diamond
Images by Colin Gaudet
Manual cover and content design by Sydney Fletcher

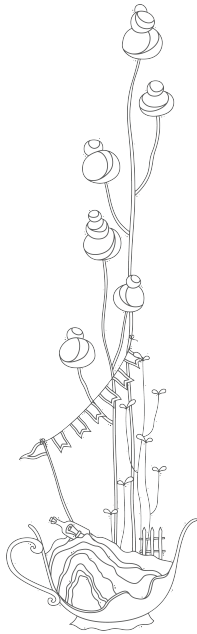
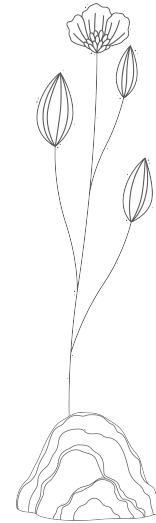


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THE PHILOSOPHY OF STILLNESS

(i) WHY SHOULD WE BE STILL?

My approach to teaching yoga places a heavy emphasis on context and intent. I am referencing a tradition that is centuries in the making and still growing. I am teaching practices that have been carried across the map and through different cultures. My commitment to studying the philosophy of yoga serves as a grounding force: it helps tether me to the roots of the tradition. It also connects me to the most important question: why? This program focuses on the modality of yoga nidrā. The context-building questions, therefore, are:

- Why is it that many traditions of yoga serve as methods towards stillness?
- What magic does the alchemy of stillness, breath and mindfulness create?
- What did the yogis know then that we are only just beginning to understand and measure now?
- In a nutshell, why should we be still?

The answers to these questions can be found in the foundational texts of the yoga tradition and through your own personal experience. Let's explore the scriptural depictions of yoga first, from the more 'recent' yoga scriptures, to its origins in Vedant philosophy.

'Astāṅga Yoga' (or the 8-limbed path), introduced by Sage Patañjali in the Yoga Sutras, is the quintessential methodology towards stillness. 'Stillness', in this system, is known as samādhi, or absorptive meditation.

THE STEPS:

Limbs 1 and 2: Yama and Niyama

Before approaching any of the later limbs, align yourself with the ethics and lifestyle of a yogi.

Limb 3: Āsana

Use what you've got (i.e. your body) to move, to strengthen, to develop an

internal awareness, and to prepare for sitting (a.k.a stillness.) This is where we find most yogis landing, in the world of sun salutations and postures.

Limb 4: Prānāyāma

Once you've fine-tuned your awareness through movement, can you start to detect, manipulate and, ultimately, free your energy self? The most obvious form of prānāyāma is through breathwork, but this limb involves awareness of even more subtle energy sources in the body, like the churn of your digestive organs, the pace of your pulse, and the movement and pull of the emotions.

Limb 5: Pratyāhāra

Having moved through limbs 1-4, your propensity for seeing the subtle is gaining more skill. Rather than directing your five senses outwardly, redirect them internally. Yes, our senses can go two ways! In this limb, one can become a master of the senses, by knowing both how they influence us (when directed outwardly) and how they can assist us with inner knowing. This limb is the gateway toward the remaining three limbs, which together, lead a practitioner into sublime stillness.

Limb 6, 7, 8: Dhāranā, Dhyāna, Samādhi

(Collectively, all three limbs are known as 'sanyam')

Translated in order as concentration, meditation, and absorption, the final three limbs are by-products of what stillness affords. When we are still, we are better able to hone our senses, to use them toward concentration and focus, which leads to a meditative state and to utter absorption. Samādhi is when we become so engrossed in our meditative state, that our story falls away: no time, no space, no name...just BEING.

Examining the list above, yoga nidrā is a practice grounded in the limbs of sensory awareness (pratyāhāra), focus (dhāranā) and meditation (dhyāna.) Perhaps for a fleeting moment, in a really great restorative shape or a deep yoga nidrā session, the story of 'you' falls away and you experience samādhi. Modern synonyms for samādhi might include bliss, or clarity, or deep rest. Of course, all of these qualities are pleasant, but what is the true intention of the experience? Why is astānga yoga nudging its practitioners towards stillness and silence?

Historically, relaxation and stillness have been key ingredients for human ingenuity. When I asked my teacher, a doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine, how the first TCM practitioners mapped the energy meridians and currents through the body, he answered that they were able to do so 'by being very still.' While relaxing under an apple tree, Newton was able to conceive of the invisible force known as gravity. Van Gogh said that 'pictures come to me as a dream' and Mozart apparently composed an entirely new piece of music while dozing in the back of a carriage (Saraswati, 1998: 48, 49.)

My experience with stillness is that it has enabled me to come into a more meaningful and informed relationship with myself. When I have knowledge behind what senses trigger me most and what patterns of thinking I hold on repeat, I am better able to use this awareness to benefit the relationships in my life. I can pause before reacting and am able to evaluate before falling into a habit. I am quicker to cultivate empathy and compassion before judgment. It is almost paradoxical, but in order to connect with others, I need to go deep into connection with myself. The

'deep connection' I'm referring to is often described with the phrase 'witness consciousness.' I am the witness to all of it: my senses, my thoughts, my emotions, my reactions. Stillness affords me this perspective. When I am able to have perspective over a thought or emotion I am experiencing, I realize that I am not that thought or emotion, I'm just the one who is here to watch it. This is the gift of sentience.

The Astānga tradition is grounded in a dualistic viewpoint: that there is a separation between the seer and what's to be seen. In order to unite with the witness (yoga means union!), we must move through the limbs of the practice. By contrast, there is an earlier branch of the yoga tree that approaches the same goal with a different methodology. Rather than moving through, we need only remember that we are already free, already whole, and that our capacity as the witness is ever-present. This is non-dualism.

In Southeast Asian philosophy, a non-dualist philosophical view is revealed through the teachings of the Vedas, specifically in their conclusions (or end of), called Vedant ('Veda', meaning knowledge and 'ant', meaning end.) The scriptures most associated with non-dualism are called the Upanishads. The Upanishads number in the thousands, their authors are unknown, and they often take the form of a dialogue between teacher and student. More poetry than pithy statements (ahem... Yoga Sutras), the Upanishads bring home the message that: you are already whole. Wow! I'm sure this statement seemed radical in 800 BCE, but it feels so relevant now! We live in a 'once I' society. 'I will be content once I'... 'I will be healthy once I'... 'I will be less stressed once I'...etc. Non-dualism collapses this 'before and after', 'good and bad' schema. You are not content or discontented. You are not healthy or ill. You are neither stressed nor are you stress free. You are not swayed by the polarities of life's experiences because you are already whole.

Kamini Desai captures the messaging of non-dualism brilliantly: 'If you are already whole, can anything be added to you? Can anything be taken away from you? You are already everything. You are eternity itself.' (2017: 29.)

*Om
Pūrnamadah
Pūrnam idam
Pūrnāt purnam udachyate
Pūrnasya pūrnām ādāya
Pūrnām evā vashishyate*

This hymn serves as the opening verse for several Upanishads and is essentially the Sanskrit version of the Desai statement above it. So here's the crux of it all: 'The issue is not that you are not whole; the issue is that you have believed yourself to be a limited version of yourself.' (Desai, 2017: 29.) When we hold fast to this belief, we operate from a place of dualism: that we are good and bad, that we are full and unfulfilled, that we lack, therefore we need to struggle to find what's missing. All of these assumptions drive us to be separate from ourselves and ultimately, from each other.

Stress and general unwellness are separating factors. They pull us into the world of opposites where we seek what we love and avoid what we hate. Conveniently, we have tools to assist us with decreasing stress and increasing relaxation.

The yoga traditions of stillness, be it meditation, yoga nidrā or restorative practices, produce a palpable shift in the body. On a biological level when tension lessens, respiratory rhythms slow, heart rate decreases and relaxation increases. On the mental and emotional level, Tias Little says a shift to a relaxed state ‘involve(s) a reorganization of the psyche away from the view of a solid, independent self...where a divided, dualistic frame of mind erodes. (2016: 231.) In short, we cannot truly love and find connection if we are in a state of fatigue, dis-ease and stress. Supported stillness affords a shift in the body towards relaxation and relaxation is the gateway towards non-dualism. It is from this place where the opposites of good and bad fall away. This is where we can practice true equanimity.

The original yogis were not salespeople. Rather than taking their word for it, they encouraged us to experience things for ourselves. I also encourage you to learn through direct experience. Having grounded yourself in the philosophical underpinnings of why we should be still, go forth and **experience** stillness. I hope that you draw your own conclusions to the meaning of yoga nidrā, and that your teaching comes from a place of intention.



(ii) THE NERVOUS SYSTEM RESPONSE

We've briefly touched on some of the intellectual reasons for being still (please know that there are many more reasons embedded within the many yoga traditions!) Beyond mind and spirit, there is another obvious reason to practice rest: by design, our body and nervous system require it!

Our bodies are equipped with an automatic system that hardwires us towards survival. This system involves our brain, hormone secretion, our respiratory, circulatory and digestive systems, among other things. Our five senses play a role in this too. Our eyes enable us to see when danger is approaching. Our ears help us listen for sirens or a fast-approaching car. Our sense of smell will notify us if a fire is burning, or natural gas is leaking. Our taste buds help us detect if the food we're eating is off. Our sense of touch will indicate that the tray coming out of the oven is hot. All of these responses are useful. They were especially useful when the threat of survival was more magnified: think woolly mammoths! When our body (aka nervous system) perceives a threat, an automatic system turns on to help keep us safe. This side of our nervous system is known as the:

Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

aka fight, flight or freeze

Examples of the SNS response in our system include:

- Pupil dilation
- Heartbeat acceleration
- Bronchi (in lungs) dilation
- Secretion of adrenaline

IN THE BRAIN

The amygdala is the section of our brain that serves as the body's smoke detector. It will warn us of impending danger and activates the body's stress response (SNS). "Activation of this fear centre triggers the cascade of stress hormones and nerve impulses that drive up blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen intake—preparing the body for fight or flight" (Van Der Kolk, 2014: 42.)

By design, we have another automatic process that is triggered when our perceived threat to survival has been diffused. Think of a time when you've had a shock to your system and how your body responded when it returned to 'normalcy.' You were likely able to take a deep breath, swallow and release some tension in your muscles. These are all depictees of the opposite side of our nervous system known as the:

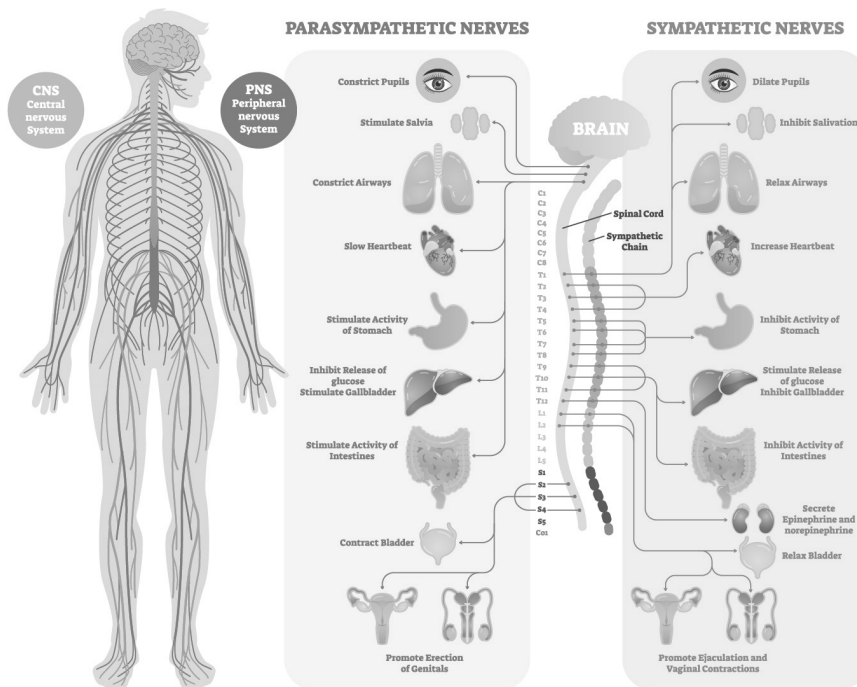
Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) aka rest and digest

Examples of the PNS response in our system include:

- Stimulation of the flow of saliva
- Heartbeat deceleration
- Peristalsis (movement of the muscles in the intestines)
- Feeling of global temperature drop (because our muscles need less blood)

Bessel Van Der Kolk defines the autonomic nervous system (ANS) as a system with two reciprocal parts, the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The SNS acts as the body's accelerator, whereas the PNS acts at the body's break (2014: 77). We require both sides of this system to function effectively.

HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM



(image credit: iStock, 2019)

THE PROBLEM

Stress has a bad reputation, but stress (and the accompanying SNS response) is not the culprit! A healthy and balanced body is able to pulse between the SNS and PNS on a regular basis. For example, we pulse between these sides of the nervous system with each breath we take: *‘whenever you take a deep breath, you activate the SNS...Exhaling, in turn, activates the PNS, which slows down the heart’* (Van Der Kolk, 2014: 77.) This pulse is what keeps us vital and each of us has a unique rhythm. In our lives today, we encounter constant stressors that our ancient bodies perceive as threats. Unfortunately, these ‘stressors’ never seem to dissipate and we find ourselves in a place of chronic stress. From a nervous system perspective, we live in a constant sympathetic state and our bodies are rarely given the chance to switch on its innate healing response (PNS.)

James R. Doty describes this problem eloquently:

If the brain perceives a threat, or is in fear for its survival, that part of the autonomic nervous system called the sympathetic nervous system kicks in... Basically, everything in the body not necessary for fighting for your life shuts down. Digestion slows, blood vessels constrict (except for those in your large muscles, which dilate), your hearing lessens, your vision narrows, your heart rate goes up, and your mouth gets dry because the lacrimal gland that regulates salivation immediately gets inhibited.

All of this is important if you are in fact fighting for your life, but this acute stress response is meant to be temporary. Living in a state of prolonged stress has all sorts of psychological and physiological repercussions—anger, depression, anxiety, chest pain, headaches, insomnia, and a suppressed immune system. (2016: 50.)

So clearly, we have a biological imperative towards seeking stillness and rest. Yoga nidrā is one such modality and it is unique in its ability to encourage both bodily and mental rest.



YOGA NIDRĀ

(I) DEFINING THE PRACTICE & OBJECTIVES

Yoga nidrā is a rich practice under the guise of a deceptively simple premise: a practitioner rests in a supported śavāsana and is led through a crafted script or meditation path. It is a practice informed by ancient anatomy and its efficacy is being increasingly measured in the fields of neuroscience and trauma recovery. On the physical level, the outcome is often a felt sense of relaxation and rest. Yoga nidrā is a tool towards encouraging a parasympathetic nervous system response. In his 1975 study on what Dr. Herbert Benson coined the ‘relaxation response,’ he concluded that a key factor to encouraging rest was to offer a mental focusing tool. If you’re at all like me, my mind is activated the most when my body is still. Yoga nidrā assists with this challenge: carefully worded scripts offer the mental focusing tool that can enhance one’s experience and quality of rest, even at the level of the mind. This is why I often refer to yoga nidrā as a wonderful blend between restorative yoga and meditation.

There are two key lineages within yoga nidrā: that of the Himalayan Institute, originated from the leadership of Swami Rama (Richard Miller of the iRest methodology is a senior teacher within this school) and that of the Bihar School, led by Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Like modern yoga āsana, where there are many branches in the family tree, yoga nidrā has evolved and been adapted for different audiences. One might argue there is no clear ‘creator’ of yoga nidrā, but we can point to Swami Saraswati’s 1976 publication, *Yoga Nidra* where he sought to codify the specific stages of the practice and claim ownership for its origins. When he was living with his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati was tasked with watching over a Sanskrit school through the night. He often slept to the sound of students chanting the Vedas (ancient yoga scriptures.) Later, at a school function, he heard the students chanting slokas (verses) that he had not studied, but somehow knew. It was as if some part of him heard and integrated the chanting even while he was sleeping. *‘I knew that knowledge was transmitted directly through the senses, but from this experience I realized that you can also gain direct knowledge without any sensory medium as well’* (Saraswati, 1998: 2.) What the Swami learned is that ‘...

sleep was not a state of total unconsciousness. When one is asleep, there remains a state of potentiality, a form of awareness that is awake and fully alert to outer situations' (Saraswati, 1998: 3.)

Here is a modern-day example: have you ever fallen asleep while watching a baseball game? Upon waking, you might have a sense of which team just hit a homerun. You have a sense of the plot of the game, even without being awake and consciously watching it. This is because only one part of your consciousness was not present for witnessing the game. Yoga nidrā is a practice that allows us to become aware of, and engage with, our deeper and more subtle layers of consciousness. In the west, you might use terms like the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind. The yogis have their own way of describing and distinguishing between states of consciousness.

(ii) CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE YOGA CONTEXT

The distinction between 'wakefulness' and other layers of consciousness are discussed in the Mandukya Upanishad. This Upanishad describes how consciousness manifests in human beings (Schwartz, 2017: 37.)

THE FOUR STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS:

- 1) **vaishvanara** – *waking state* – it is here where our senses are directed outwardly, as we are perceiving and encountering our environment.
- 2) **tajasa** – *dream state* – it is here where our senses are directed inwardly and our sense of self becomes a little more blurred.
- 3) **prajñā** – *dreamless, deep sleep* – our ego and sense of self completely vanish when we are in deep sleep.
- 4) **turiya** – *'fourth state', a realized state* – this is a state of profound awareness and non-attachment to one's ego identity.

THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads make up some of the oldest philosophical scriptures in the world, dating 800-500 BCE. Meaning 'to sit near', they are beautiful poems that often take the format of a dialogue between teacher and student.

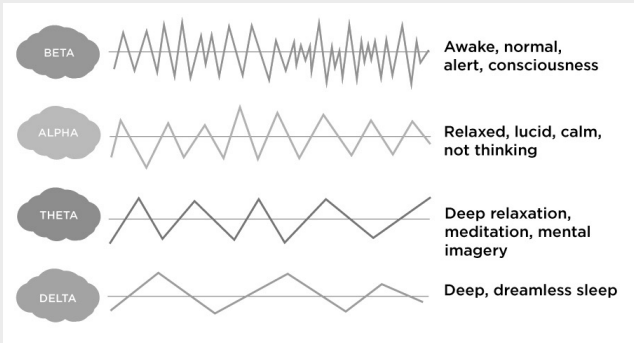
If we fall asleep during a yoga nidrā practice, you can see that there are three other levels of consciousness receiving the practice beyond just the waking state. And what state do practitioners of yoga nidrā encounter? I often feel as though there's a tug between the waking and dream states. The chart below links these eastern concepts, with western measurements of brainwave patterns and their corresponding functions. Both Swami Saraswati and Kamini Desai argue that yoga nidrā guides a practitioner from the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states into turiya (2017: 5.)

STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS	BRAINWAVE PATTERN	FUNCTIONS & THEMES
Waking state <i>Vaishvanara</i>	Beta 14-30Hz	
Fourth state <i>Turiya</i>	Alpha 8-13Hz	
Dreaming <i>Tajjasa</i>	Theta 4-7Hz	
Deep sleep <i>Prajña</i>	Delta 1-3.5Hz	



silence + A + U + M + silence

A NOTE ON BRAINWAVES



‘Yoga nidrā slowly takes us down into progressively quieter brainwave states until the sky (of our awareness) is empty’ (Desai, 2017: 33.)

What are brainwaves?

‘At the root of all our thoughts, emotions and behaviours is electrical communication between nerve cells (neurons) within our brains. This communication is co-ordinated across the organ (the brain), and synchronised electrical pulses from masses of neurons communicating with each other form patterns known as brainwaves.’ They are measured in Hertz (Hz) which capture the rate at which electrical currents of the brain are cycling per second.

A key feature of our brainwaves that they change according to our state of consciousness (e.g. awake or asleep), according to what we’re doing (e.g. active or resting) and according to how we’re feeling (e.g. relaxed or agitated). They accurately reflect our state, our level of engagement, and our mood. Each brain wave has its own purpose and brings its own experience. (yoganidrā network.org)

What pace of brainwaves has yoga nidrā been proven to induce?

In yoga nidrā, we achieve a similar pace of brainwaves to that of the Alpha or Theta level (Desai, 2017: 40), thus we are consciously accessing the experience of dreaming while still being awake!

A 1999 study based in Scandinavia measured brain activity during yoga nidrā. Those practicing displayed a significant increase in Theta brainwaves, typical of a brain that’s sleeping, and a decrease of Alpha waves. This indicates that yoga nidrā induces a state of conscious awareness that is not sleep but ‘sleep-like due to increased Theta and even Delta brainwave activity’ (Desai, 2017: 221.)

A 1998 study concluded that ‘yoga nidrā is a technique in which one can alter the state of consciousness from Beta to Alpha and then to Delta brainwaves. It is shown that an individual knowingly experiences these different stages of consciousness in yoga nidrā (Desai, 2017: 222.)

How does consciously shifting to different brainwaves impact us?

Theta brainwaves are associated with increased creativity and feelings of being relaxed (Desai, 2017: 42.)

Our body reserves specific healing functions for sleep states (for example, tissue repair, muscle growth, and protein synthesis.) Slowing our brainwaves to sleep-like states can encourage these healing functions, among other things (Desai, 2017: 275.) During Delta frequency, cortisol levels (a stress hormone) are decreased (Desai, 2017: 48.) If (and when) a practitioner reaches the Delta brainwaves during meditation or yoga nidrā, they are accessing a profoundly healing state.

WHERE DOES NIDRĀ FIT WITHIN THE YOGA TRADITION(S)?

Nidrā is a beautiful marriage of many traditions:

- The body scan is a practice informed by **Tantric Yoga**, specifically the practice of nyasa which means to lay down and assign various parts of the body to different mantras, mantras or dieties.
- States of consciousness and the layers of existence (koshas, see pg. 56) are introduced in the Upanishads, with their grounding in the **Vedant** philosophical tradition.
- The word nidrā itself is described in **Patañjali's Yoga Sutras** as a type of thought-wave. Nidrā or 'sleep' is one thought-wave. The remaining types of mind waves or vrittis, are: correct knowledge; knowledge gained from the five senses; knowledge based on imagination and opinion; and memory (Sutra 1.6).
- In a later sutra, Patañjali says that the knowledge that exists in dream and sleep can become the object of one's meditation. Because dreams and sleep are much subtler than our waking state, remaining conscious during nidrā is listed as a way to purify and make peaceful the mind. (Sutra 1.38)
- The stage that involves sensing opposites is a radical act of **non-dualism!**

Richard Miller translates yoga nidrā as a paradox of sorts: *'yoga is an awakening to our true nature (or witness self), whereas nidrā is the word for sleep. Taken together, yoga nidrā, is the 'sleep of the yogi.'* Yoga nidrā is a play on words. It implies 'that the normal person is asleep to their True Nature through all states of consciousness – waking, dreaming, and deep sleep – while the yogī is the one who is awake to and knows his or her True Nature across all states, even sleep' (2010: 18.) Sounds like Turiya to me!

MEASURED BENEFITS OF YOGA NIDRĀ

A snapshot of yoga nidrā-specific studies:

- In 2002, a study showed that yoga nidrā techniques increase the release of dopamine (a feel-good hormone) by up to 65%! (Desai, 2017: 216.)
- A 2013 study of the iRest methodology of yoga nidrā showed a significant reduction in stress, worry and depression among a group of 66 students who practiced for 8 weeks (Desai, 2017: 216.)
- A 2005 study on yoga nidrā found that it strengthens the parasympathetic response and boosts the immune system by increasing Alpha brainwave activity (Desai, 2017: 217.)
- Richard Miller's iRest yoga nidrā method is being used by the Department of Defense (USA) to reduce the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). iRest has been studied since 2007 and in 2010, a survey of those attending yoga nidrā classes found that 85% reported improvements across 13 different symptoms including intrusive memories, headaches, anxiety, depression, insomnia and more (Desai, 2017: 219.)
- Studies have found that the yoga nidra practice (or "state") appears to reflect an integrated response by the hypothalamus, resulting in decreased sympathetic (excitation) nervous activity and increased parasympathetic (relaxation) function (Ferreira-Vorkapic et al, 2018)
- The association of Yoga Nidra with a shift toward parasympathetic dominance is also related to high cardiac vagal control, which, in turn, is related to reduced anxiety and better subjective and objective sleep quality (Ferreira-Vorkapic et al, 2018)

**see the Resources section for accessing additional studies*

(iv) TEACHING PEDAGOGY

In his book where he coined the term ‘the relaxation response’, Herbert Benson categorized four specific instructions for activating the PNS response. These are helpful when considering your approach to both practicing and facilitating yoga nidrā.

- 1) a quiet environment
I'll add to this: a warm room, soft lighting and any additional enhancements such as atmospheric music or candlelight.
An instructor might also consider how they are occupying the space by adopting a soft voice, moving slowly and wearing non-distracting clothing
- 2) a mental device such as a word, phrase or object to dwell upon
to shift the mind from logical, externally oriented thought, Benson suggests that there should be a constant stimulus to which the mind can anchor
- 3) the adoption of a passive attitude, which Benson lists as one of the most important elements
think C minus student
- 4) a comfortable position
see below for suggested nidrā postures (1975: 27, 110 159.)

Yoga nidrā requires stillness and time. The practice can be enhanced by utilizing what we know about a restorative practice:

- Participants practice resting in a comfortable śāvāsana. Because the practitioner will be still for up to 45 minutes, a very simple and supported shape is recommended: participant rests in śāvāsana on a mat and blanket (the length of the mat for extra padding), bolster under knees, blanket beneath skull for head and neck support, and a blanket over the body for warmth.
An eye pillow is also a welcome addition;
- A restful posture allows the nervous system to down-regulate and for the body to become completely still;
- The combination of a still śāvāsana and consistent guidance from the instructor creates a state of both profound relaxation and alertness;
- Instructions for students can include: that they are kind to themselves above all else; that they are not too effortful; that there is no wrong way to experience yoga nidrā.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Yoga nidrā has been described as an adaptogenic practice (yoganidrā network.org) in that it tends to provide the practitioner with exactly what they need from the practice, in that moment. We see many reasons for practicing yoga nidrā (and I'm sure you could name more):

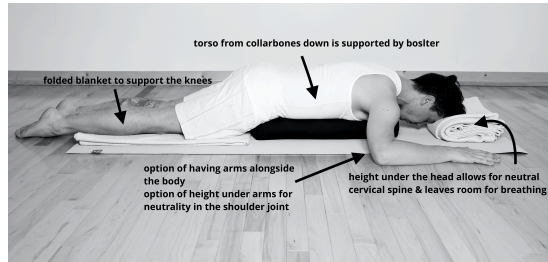
- for rest;
- to assist with sleep-related issues like insomnia;
- to heal;
- to boost creativity;
- to solve a problem or gain clarity on a decision;
- or as a meditative or spiritual practice.

As a yoga nidrā practitioner and facilitator, you have the opportunity to curate and define your own intentions. The following questions provide some guidance at the onset of a practice, for both yourself and your students:

What is my intention in offering (or practicing) yoga nidrā right now?

Given that intention, are there stages of the practice I can forgo? Are there stages of the practice that are necessary to offer? What is the balance between prescription and openness?

ŚĀVĀSANA (CORPSE) POSE



Traditional Śāvāsana

- body rests in a neutral shape
- limbs are away from each other to avoid sensory stimulation
- a bolster under the knees (see picture at top right) is beneficial for those with lower back strain (or tight hamstrings) but may be contraindicated for those with lower blood pressure and/or shorter limbs

Alternatives Śāvāsana (above)

1. PRONE
2. SUPPORTED KNEES: a useful option for those who have lower back tension
3. SIDE-LYING: an alternative for pregnant students or those who cannot rest on their back for time

Not pictured here, propping a student up on an incline with a bolster is a good strategy for anyone practicing with respiratory issues.

Leading a yoga nidrā practice involves creating an atmosphere of ease for everyone in the room. I generally move through the following steps each time I offer this practice:

- **GREET** participants and **EXPLAIN** what yoga nidrā is in a nutshell. Outline the practice: we'll set up props, move a little and then rest;
- Offer **REASSURANCES** regarding falling asleep;
- Outline any **THEME** or specificity regarding the practice for that day;
- Offer **SUPPORT** once participants are settling into śāvāsana. Provide any needed extra props or suggestions on posture;
- **LEAD** the nidrā practice;
- Bring the room back, **CLOSE** the practice and offer time and space for questions.

(v) THE KOSHA MODEL

The methodology of a yoga nidrā practice is based on ancient anatomy. Long before we began dissecting muscles and naming bones, the earliest yogis ascertained that there was more to being a human than just being a physical body. The kosha model was first introduced in the Taittiriya Upanishad and later discussed in scriptures including the Vivek Chudamni and the Panchdashī. In these sources we find a depiction of what components make up the ‘stuff’ of being human.

Kosha is defined as a layer or sheath. We have five (**pañca**) of these layers, all of which cover our truest Self, the one that is connected universally to all other beings. (*Note - This is a big concept, beyond the scope of this manual. Feel free to sub other words in for ‘Self’; perhaps it’s ‘soul’, ‘essence’, ‘true nature’ or ‘witness consciousness’.*) The five layers from the grossest to most subtle are listed below. I’ve also illustrated each kosha through an example of taking a restorative shape.

ANNAMAYA Food Body	Our physical form made up of organs, tissues, muscles, skin, bones and blood	The settling of our bones and muscles into a restorative shape is a manipulation of the annamaya kosha
PRĀNAMAYA Vital or Energy Body	Our energetic form; if our blood is annamaya, the circulation of our blood is prānamaya (note- the chakras and vayus exist here)	After time in the pose, one’s exhales become longer, a shift on the level of the prānamaya kosha
MANOMAYA Mental Body	Our mental form; the mind and its workings (Schwartz, 2017: 32)	As the body and breath settles, the mind has been taking in the sensory experience of the pose
VIJÑĀNAMAYA Wisdom Body	Our intellect form; our manomaya gathers information from the five senses, our higher mind (vijñānamaya) perceives this information	After even more time in the pose, a subtle voice becomes audible. perhaps it’s saying ‘I really needed this time to be still’
ĀNANDAMAYA Bliss Body	Our bliss form; the closest sheath to the Self	The moment in a restorative pose when you are no longer ‘me, practicing this pose’; your experience is beyond words, beyond description, beyond the concept of time and space

Some important items to note here:

- o each **kosha** exists simultaneously, through and within each other **kosha**. In order for us to learn them, we discuss them separately, but really, they exist as a whole.
- o the subtlest of the **koshas** permeates the grosser **koshas**. This holds tremendous implications for our yoga practice: in order to impact the subtle, we can utilize the gross! For example, the experience of the mind settling when one focuses on breathing deeply. Because the subtle mind permeates the breath, we can use the breath to impact the mind!



The kosha system, in addition to being a wondrous depiction of how complicated us humans are, becomes an effective road map toward achieving the goals of rest and stress reduction. A nidrā script is catered to speak directly and progressively to each kosha, and thus assists the practitioner in moving towards deeper layers, and back out again. With practice, one can connect and dialogue with parts of the self that are seldom contacted.

Richard Miller describes the movement through the koshas as an exploration:

Exploring the physical body, we come to the conclusion that the body is not solid. It is infinite spacious vibration, without center or periphery.

Exploring the energy body, we realize that the body is fluid, unlimited energy.

Exploring the bodies of feeling and emotion (prānamaya), and intellect, we realize that our emotions and thoughts are only passing phenomena superimposed upon a background of spacious awareness.

Exploring the body of joy, we realize the vastness of equanimity that exists independent of any experience.

(2010: 70.)

1

2



3

4

5

IN THE BRAIN

(from Van Der Kolk's The Body Keeps the Score)

It can be useful to differentiate the manomaya kosha from the vijñānamaya kosha by understanding two sections of the human brain:

i) Emotional Brain = reptilian brain + limbic system

Reptilian brain functions include all the things new babies can do: eat; sleep; wake; cry; breathe; feel temperature, hunger, wetness and pain. This part of the brain also rids the body of toxins by urinating and defecating.

The limbic system is the seat of our emotions, the monitor of danger, the judge of what is pleasurable or scary, the arbiter of what is important (or not) for survival purposes (2014: 56.)

Together, these two sections make up the emotional brain, a simpler part of our brain than that of the neocortex (our rational brain). The emotional brain assesses incoming information in a more global way by using predictive tendencies (ie. this part of our brain jumps to conclusions based on rough similarities) (2014: 57.)

ii) Neocortex

This is the top part of our brain, or the 'newest' part and it is responsible for all of our frontal-lobe capacities: sitting still (sound like meditation?); keeping sphincters in check; using words rather than acting out; understanding abstract and symbolic ideas; planning for tomorrow; being in tune with those around you (2014: 57.)

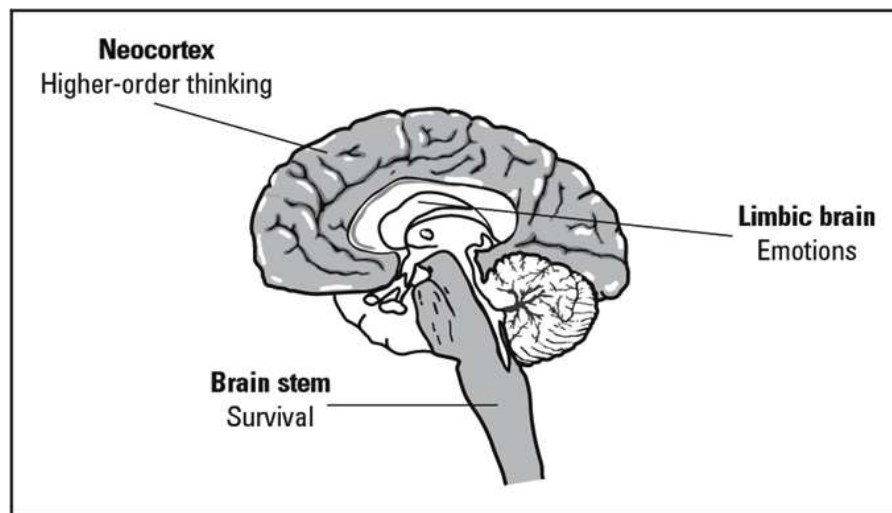
I would like to posit the following links between these two mind-based koshas and these two sections of the brain:

Manomaya Kosha

Emotional brain (reptilian brain + limbic system)

Vijñānamaya kosha

Neocortex



(<https://bookofthrees.com/triune-brain>)

(vi) STAGES OF THE PRACTICE

My yoga nidrā methodology was taught to me by Sheila Cullen. Self described as a modernist, Sheila borrows from the tradition and ameliorates the nidrā practice with a grounding in science. My own time teaching in this modality, combined with Sheila's foundation, has led me to adopt a specific set of stages:

Stage one – ARRIVING

Allowing time for participants to settle into stillness. Using this to remind them that it's ok to move, it's ok to zone in and out, it's ok if sleep happens.

Stage two – HOME BASE and INNER RESOURCES

As instructors, we can set up the practice of yoga nidrā in a way that offers more agency to our students. The intention behind this stage is to create a touchstone or inner refuge that a participant can return to, should they become lost or uncomfortable during the practice. In this stage, visualization and imagination are used to establish an inner resource unique to each individual. This 'home base' could be an inner space of their choosing, or reconnecting to the sensation of the breath or physical body. I highly recommend including this stage each time you offer yoga nidrā, though it is especially important when working with participants you haven't practiced with before.

Stage three – SANKALPA DIG

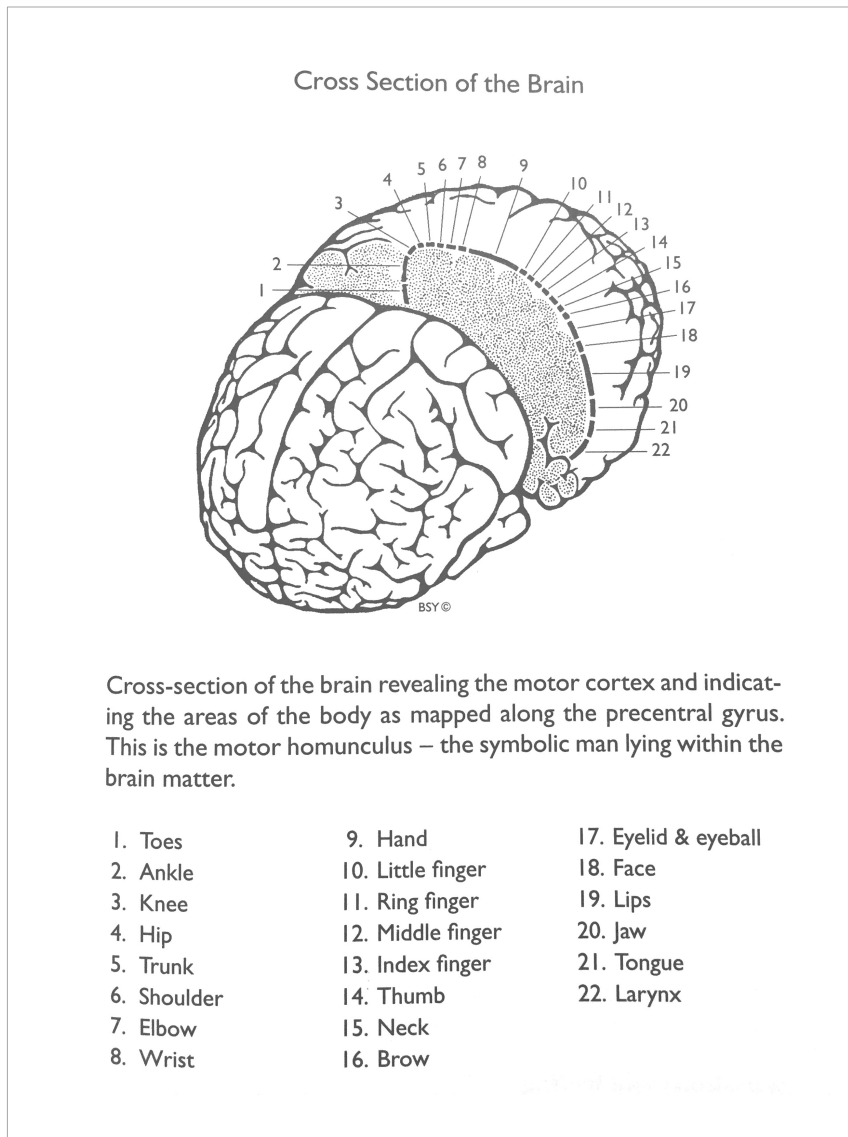
Listening, building and setting a personal intention for the practice. Some types of yoga nidrā practices place a heavy emphasis on intention, so we will devote more time to this in a section to come.

Stage four – BODY SCAN

Guiding participants to drop into an awareness of a part of the body as they hear it named. The pace is quick for this stage, so that participants are discouraged from lingering in the stories of their own bodies.

Why the body scan is bad-ass

What makes the body scan portion so intriguing is its pairing with what we now know about the brain-body connection from modern neuroscience. Through examining both the sensory and motor cortices of the brain, researchers have shown that each part of the body is precisely mapped, with some body parts occupying more brain tissue than others (Saraswati, 1998: 35). Because the motor cortex is involved in orchestrating fine motor control, the space that a body part takes up in this area of the brain is proportionate to the complexity of movement in that body part (e.g. Think of the detailed movements our hands and fingers can perform) (yoganidrā network.org). Our sensory cortex processes input from the sense organs, which also explains why some areas of the body take up more real estate than others (i.e. the sensitivity of the hands, feet, jaw, tongue and genitals). When we think about a body part, the areas of the brain corresponding to that part in the motor and sensory cortices becomes active. A body scan links the brain with the physical body and allows both body and mind to arrive into the practice. A depiction of the motor homunculus is on the following page. Richard Miller describes the body scan section of a nidrā practice as utilizing both 'Eastern and Western maps', be it the homunculus or the chakra system (2010: 46).



(Saraswati, 1998: 37)

STAGE FIVE – Noticing Prāna

What is prāna? Life force, qi, energy, vitality – we have a lot of names for this. In the yoga tradition, prāna is the subtle layer deep to the physical body. The grossest manifestation of prāna in the body is the breath, though one can observe prāna in the beating of the heart, the gurgle of the digestive organs and the pace of one’s pulse.

STAGE SIX – Manomaya (sensing opposites)

Shifting ever deeper into the koshas, this stage invites one to experience and hold opposite sensations in the same body. Dancing between opposites like heat/cold, heavy/light, spacious/contained, we can encourage participants to hold both experiences equally. The lasting intention is to realize that we aren’t these dual sensations, but rather, that we are the container for experiencing (and witnessing) these contrasts.

I can't emphasize enough the efficacy of this stage. I will leave it to the yoganidrā network.org to describe it more eloquently:

One way of describing the apposition of opposites is that it overloads the conscious mind by encouraging it to experience disparate sensations, first alternately, and then at the same time. The point of this... is that the rational mind finds it extremely difficult to experience two opposing sensations simultaneously, so it has to take a back seat. This allows for the unconscious to become more active, which serves to deepen the trance.

(Section Four of Comparative Structures, Online Immersive Course)

In summation, this stage offers the potential to free oneself from the limits of the rational mind. It can open up space for the subconscious and intuition.

STAGE SEVEN – Chidākash

One could write an entire dissertation on the origins of this word, but for the sake of understanding its use in this stage, I'll offer up two definitions:

i) chitt ākash

Pulling these two Sanskrit words apart, we can see the basis of this compound word:

chitt - the mind

ākash – space

Translated together, the chitt ākash is the mind space. And what a beautiful space it is! Here, we direct participants to observe the space directly behind their eyelids. At first, this space seems as big as one's forehead. Once the eyes adjust to this 'inner vision', they'll see that this space is as vast as the sky and ever-expanding. Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, calls this space the 'field for you to know.' If we take what we've learned from the koshas, we know that behind the layers of the body, energy, mind, intellect and bliss, there is an ever-present watcher. This is the witness consciousness. This is what we reconnect to when we meditate.

ii) chidākash

We see this word popping up in the Yog Vashisht Gita, a jñāna yoga scripture from the 12th-13th century. Here, chidākash refers to the 'space of consciousness.' I would like to offer up a distinction here between chitt and chidākash: whereas the chitt ākash is the *individual* mind space, the chidākash is the *universal* space of awareness. The former is full of movement (as our minds naturally move) and the latter is motionless. The chitt ākash is the wave that appears from the water of the chidākash. It is my intention (and belief) that once we shift past our unique koshas, we are able to access this universal consciousness space. It's why I've chosen to name this stage after its universal objective, the chidākash.

Once the role of the 'knower' and 'the field to know' have been established, we offer a list of archetypal imagery for visualization. In addition to activating the vision centre of the brain, this stage brings us in touch with our creativity and our imagination – both are often underused in adulthood!

STAGE EIGHT – Sankalpa Plant

Thus far, we've dug through the food, energy, mental and wisdom body. In this stage, we are flirting with our bliss body. Moving beyond the confines of the intellect and ego, who often bypass the voice of the heart, we are able to embed our intention into the subconscious. It is here where we can draw the conclusion that our intention is more of a truth, than an aspiration, and based in the present rather than future tense.

STAGE NINE – Return

Deep sea divers take their time on the return journey. For their own safety, when they emerge from the depths of the ocean, they go slowly to allow their body and breath to adapt. The same can be said for yoga nidrā. We are leading participants into deep communion with themselves. The return stage is about bringing them back with care and progression. One might briefly move through the koshas from subtle to gross here. I often encourage the outward reach of the senses as a way of returning. (See more in the sample script section.)

We know that the subtle koshas permeate the gross, so you could argue that each yoga nidrā stage is speaking to all of the koshas. For the sake of the methodology, here's a rough mapping of which kosha links up to each stage:

ARRIVING	Annamaya Prānamaya if you are noting breath awareness Manomaya if you are noting thoughts/ senses
HOME BASE and INNER RESOURCES	All of them, in particular, manomaya and vijñānamaya
SANKALPA DIG	Vijñānamaya, ānandamaya
BODY SCAN	Annamaya
NOTICING PRĀNA	Prānamaya
MANOMAYA (sensing opposites)	Manomaya
CHIDĀKASH	Vijñānamaya
SANKALPA PLANT	Ānandamaya
RETURN	All of them, emphasis on annamaya and prānamaya

(vii) SANKALPA ZOOM-IN

A key distinction between yoga nidrā and other types of meditation is that it places emphasis on intention. A nidrā practice opens and closes with intention setting. This intention (or seed to be planted) is called a *sankalpa*.

It's easier to define *sankalpa* by noting its opposite, what it isn't. In the Yoga Sutras, Patañjali notes there are five types of *chitt vrittis*, or waves of the mind (Sutra 1.6). We have already learned about one of them, *nidrā*, or sleep. Another *vritti* shares some syllables with the word 'sankalpa':

vikalpa – this is a thought-wave based on imagination and opinion, not truth. Worrying thoughts are the most common example of a *vikalpa vritti*. When we worry, our thoughts are based on fear, doubt and, ultimately, things that aren't currently real (because they are based in the future.) For example, I worry about how best I can present this information to you. My worry is based, in part, on doubt (that I can't do this work well enough) and based on fear (that come our training dates, I'll totally blow it.) Do you see how none of these worries are based on reality? I'm prophesizing about the future, and my imagination is getting the better of me. So... if a *vikalpa* is based on fear and doubt, then a....

sankalpa – is based on certainty and connection to the truth. Though we commonly define *sankalpa* as a heart-felt intention or desire, its roots run deeper. A *sankalpa* is a thought-wave you can plant that is based on certainty.

We could peel back this term even more, until we land on its root word: *kalpa*. A *kalpa* is a pre-idea. If our mind could be likened to the ocean, a *kalpa* is the swell that will ultimately produce a wave. This wave is a *vritti*. A more specific definition of *sankalpa*, is the desire that produces an idea, which produces a thought. When we work with intention-setting, we examine our desires and use our imagination (*vikalpa*) to plant a positive seed (*sankalpa*). From the planting of this seed, we are able to open up to a new way of thinking and, ultimately, a new way of experiencing the world.

WHY INTENTION SETTING WORKS

The efficacy of intention-setting has been brilliantly captured through studies of neuroplasticity (though the yogis had this figured out thousands of years ago...) Before we dive into the West, it's time for one more definition:

sanskāras – experiential patterns recorded in the mind, mental impressions

Sanskāras can be both conscious and latent. We are born with some (like the *sanskāra* that orients us to seek breast milk from the moment we are born.) Other *sanskāras* are learned through how we are raised, societal conditioning and our own life experience. Western therapists might refer to *sanskāras* as 'schemas.' Schemas are defined as 'cognitive frameworks that help us organize and interpret information.' Both *sanskāras* and schemas provide us with shortcuts to understanding reality. Whether conscious

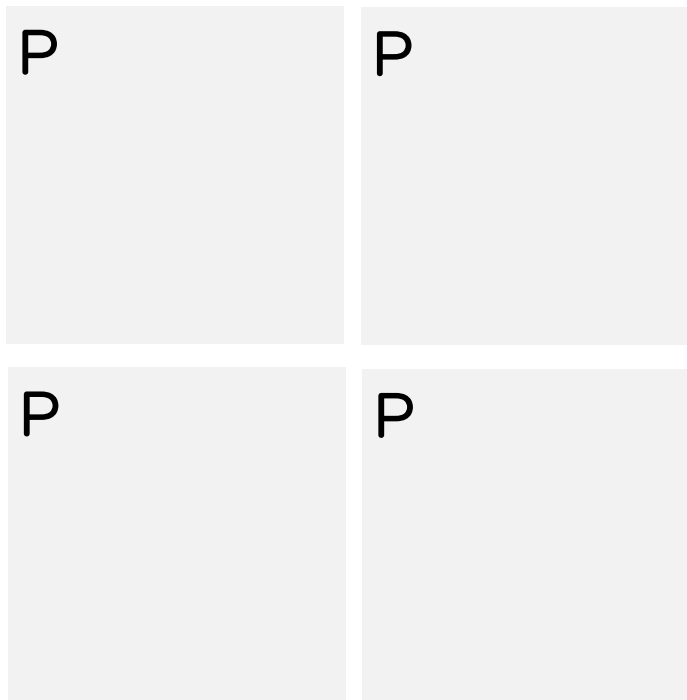
or latent, *sanskāras* can be helpful and harmful. Desai says we are so motivated by our *sanskāras* that most often, we aren't relating to each other in the present moment, but rather, are interacting with each other's *sanskāras* (2017: 186)!

The body/mind complex is built of the koshas. Based on the beliefs, conclusions and incomplete experiences held at the Bliss body (*sanskāras*), all koshas below it are affected. If we have a deeply imprinted experience that causes us to repeatedly conclude 'Life is hard,' or 'Life is against me,' that conclusion will filter our perceptions (Wisdom body), shape our thoughts (Mental body), direct our feelings (Energy body) and even drive the way we act (Physical body.)(Desai, 2017: 69)

We can use an awareness of our unique *sanskāras* to help inform our *sankalpa*. Why and how?

Doty notes that our brains are unique in two ways: they prefer familiarity and they do not distinguish between an experience that is intensely imagined and an experience that is real (2017: 135.) When we set an intention in yoga nidrā, we often encourage one to dive into all of the senses and imagine what that intention would look, sound, feel, smell and taste like if it were to be true. This is the 'intensely imagined' part to which Doty is referring. Like a good audience, the brain will pick up this well-imagined intention as though it is presently true. Going back to our schemas, our brain seeks out familiarity by only receiving the sensory information that reinforces our deeply held beliefs. If we are to create any shift in our brains from negative to positive thinking, it involves resetting what's familiar to us. It sounds like a massive pursuit, but it's as easy as being particular about how we formulate a *sankalpa* statement. The *sankalpa* statement in a yoga nidrā practice is specific in terms of its grammar:

THE 4 P'S



When we create an intention that aligns with the 4 P's, we are connecting with two things:

1. **our language centres in the brain** (how we understand and interpret the meaning of words)
Being the super computer that it is, when our brain hears a sentence in the future tense, it will slot it into a 'future' file. This changes nothing in the present moment. When we speak intentions in the present tense, our brain will toss these words into a new, 'present tense' file, where it will actually work with it!
2. **our schemas**
Intentionally planting a *sankalpa* is building a new schema or *sanskāra*. Because it seeks familiarity, your mind will organize new information and interpret it through this new file. We can create a new lens for how we view our lives. The more this new lens is reinforced, the more we can prune out old and under-used ways of thinking. Our brain's ability to reconfigure and rewire is known as neuroplasticity.

Patañjali says we can replace our negative *sanskāras* with positive ones. In fact, the positive *sanskāras* can neutralize the negative (Sutra 1.50.) This holds amazing implications! We can be mindful about the seeds we plant. And we can use intention-setting to reset thought patterns in our lives.

**'Sankalpa, resolve, or intention
creates a focal point
that awakens the latent power of the mind
and allows it to become significantly
more capable.'**

(Stryker, 2011: 85)

RESOURCES

Sankalpa worksheets

EXERCISE ONE // Writing Your Heart

(Produced by Sydney Fletcher, Integrated Coaching & Body Work)

MARK THE VALUES BELOW THAT SPEAK TO YOU.

From this list, narrow it down to the top 5. If you could pick 5 values to live by, what would they be?

accomplishment	accountability	accuracy
achievement	adventure	authenticity
beauty	calm	challenge
change	cleanliness	collaboration
commitment	communication	community
compassion	competence	competition
concern for others	cooperation	coordination
creativity	decisiveness	democracy
discipline	ease	efficiency
empowerment	equality	excellence
fairness	faith	family
focus	freedom	friendship
fun	global view	good will
goodness	gratitude	hard work
harmony	honesty	honor
independence	inner peace	innovation
integrity	intimacy	joy
justice	knowledge	law and order
leadership	love	loyalty
meaning	money	participation
patriotism	peace	personal growth
playfulness	pleasure	positive attitude
power	practicality	preservation
privacy	problem solving	progress
prosperity, wealth	punctuality	purpose
obedience	quality	recreation
regularity	resourcefulness	respect
responsiveness	results-oriented	risk-taking
safety	satisfying others	security
self control	self-reliance	service (to others/society)
simplicity	skill	speed
spirituality	stability	strength
teamwork	tolerance	tradition
truth	unity	wisdom

MY TOP 5 VALUES ARE:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

LET'S FLESH THIS OUT EVEN FURTHER.

Why did you pick these 5 values? How would you define each value you've selected?

i.e. I selected this value because _____.

I define this value as _____.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Defining our values can assist us with determining our life's goals, our next steps, or our sankalpa.

The previous exercise has helped you identify and define your top values.

WITH CONFIDENCE IN YOUR FINDINGS, FORMAT YOUR SANKALPA HERE:

LET THESE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS BE YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

What do I really want?

What do I want to bring more of into my life?

Remember the 4 P's!

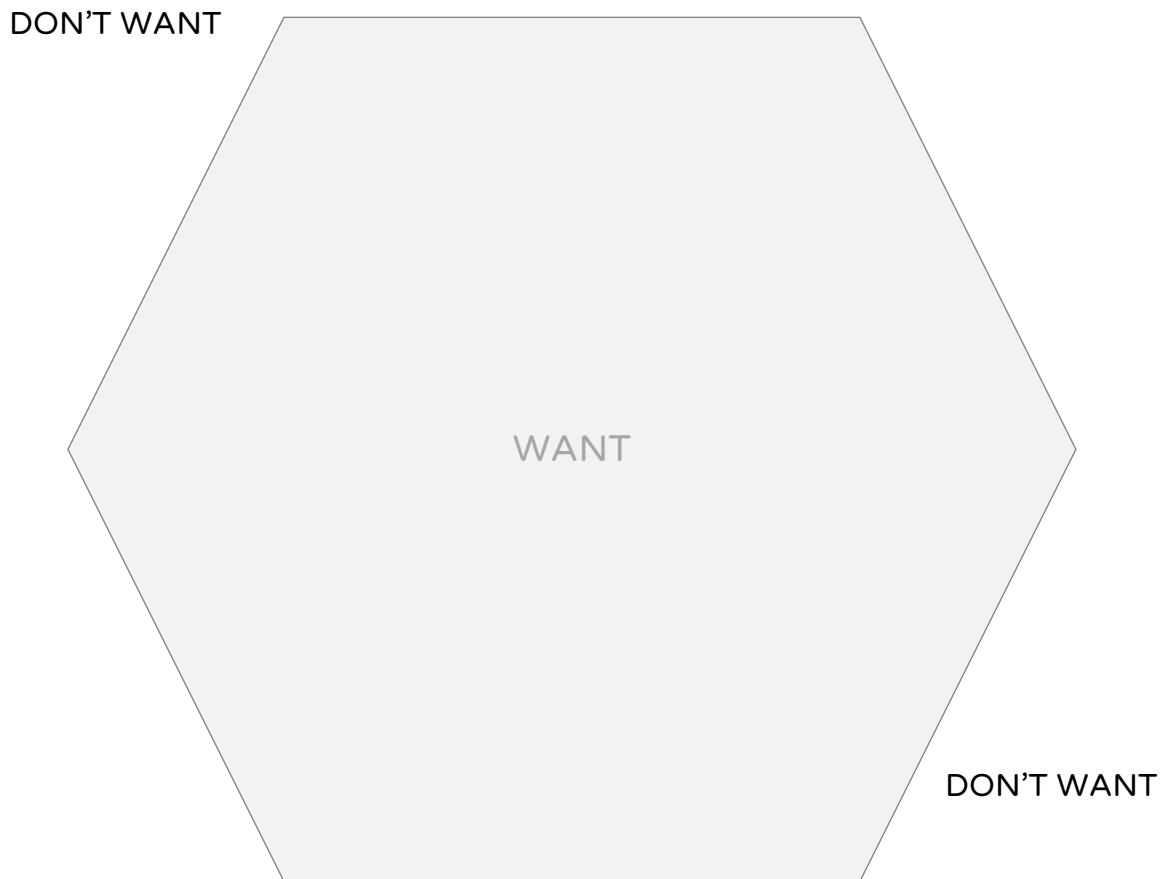
EXERCISE TWO // Drawing our Wants

(Produced by Sydney Fletcher, Integrated Coaching & Body Work)

IT IS OFTEN EASIER TO UNCOVER WHAT WE TRULY WANT BY DETERMINING THE OPPOSITE- WHAT WE DON'T WANT!

Use the image below to draw your 'wants' and 'not wants.'

Our brain responds to all sensory information, so feel free to include all of the senses here. What do you want to SEE, TOUCH, HEAR, SMELL, TASTE and FEEL? Include emotions. Include whatever comes up!



CAN YOU FORMULATE AN INTENTION
BASED ON WHAT YOU TRULY WANT?

EXERCISE THREE // Listening to the Body

(Reproduced in part from *Seven Seeds Yoga Nidra Teacher Training Manual*,
Sheila Cullen © 2017)

ROOT (between the sitting bones, right at the base of the spine) (1)

LOWER LIMBS (LEGS, ANKLES OR FEET) (1)

PELVIC BOWL AND/OR HIPS (2)

SACRUM (2)

SOLAR PLEXUS/ABDOMINAL REGION (3)

LUNGS AND RIBCAGE (4)

HEART CENTRE (4)

SHOULDERS, ARMS, WRISTS OR HANDS (4)

NECK AND THROAT (5)

IN BETWEEN THE EYEBROWS (6)

TOP OF THE SKULL (7)

BODY AS A WHOLE (7)

OF THE LOCATIONS LISTED ABOVE, PLEASE RANK THE AREAS OF THE BODY THAT
ARE MOST CALLING OUT TO YOU AT THIS MOMENT.

What area is speaking the loudest? What are the sensations this area is offering you
(ie. tightness, lightness, pulsing, temperature, discomfort, ease etc.)?

Be sure to write the number in brackets associated with each location

LIST ONE:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

USING THE LIST BELOW, PLEASE CIRCLE THE FIVE TRAITS THAT MOST RESONATE FOR YOU IN THIS VERY MOMENT.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| compassion (4) | good listener (5) |
| truthfulness (5) | wisdom and mastery (7) |
| ability to be still (1) | peaceful (4) |
| healthy body image (1) | loving and loveable (4) |
| good communication skills (5) | nonjudgmental (4) |
| good dream recall (6) | commitment (3) |
| security (1) | emotional intelligence (2) |
| ability to change (2) | healthy boundaries (3) |
| ability to receive (4) | prosperity (1) |
| good self-esteem (3) | spiritually connected (7) |
| ability to self-nurture (2) | self-acceptance (4) |
| creative expression (5) | clarity of mind (7) |
| strong intuition (6) | ability to watch & witness without reacting (6) |

NOW PRIORITIZE THESE TRAITS BY LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE.

Again, include the number in the brackets.

LIST TWO

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

COMPARE LIST ONE WITH LIST TWO.

Are there any items on your lists that have the same number in the brackets?

Notice the number in the brackets that has the most entries and/or ranks high on your lists. The following table lists the chakra (or energy centre) to which each trait corresponds. You may choose to develop a sankalpa that is informed by your energy body using the phrases below.

The seven chakras (energy centres) and their corresponding qualities:

(1) Root Chakra	ability to be still	security	prosperity	healthy body image
(2) Sacral Chakra	ability to change	ability to self-nurture	emotional intelligence	create newness in your life
(3) Solar Plexus	self-acceptance	commitment	good self-esteem	healthy boundaries
(4) Heart Chakra	compassion	peaceful	non-judgemental	loving and loveable
(5) Throat Chakra	creative expression	good listening skills	truthfulness	good communication skills
(6) 3 rd Eye Chakra	good dream recall	ability to watch and witness without reacting	strong intuition	able to find perspective
(7) Crown Chakra	spiritually connected	clarity of mind	wisdom and mastery	able to know oneself

Sample intentions based on each chakra:

(1) ROOT CHAKRA – MŪLĀDHĀRA

- I move forward guided in safety.
- I give and receive abundance.
- It is safe for me to be here.
- The earth supports me and meets my needs.
- I love my body and trust its wisdom.

(2) SACRAL CHAKRA – SWĀDĪSTHĀNA

- I am open and accepting of change.
- I absorb information from my feelings.
- I deserve pleasure in my life.
- I flow with the rhythms of the rivers of life.
- I live life with harmony and fluidity.

(3) SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA – MANIPURA

- I embrace and unfold my life's true purpose.
- I love and trust myself.
- I accomplish the tasks I start.
- I align all action with my highest vision.
- I am powerful.

(4) HEART CHAKRA – ANAHATA

- I trust in myself and the loving heart of the universe.
- I am loving and loved.
- I release the weight of the past to receive the gift of the present.
- I am worthy of love.
- I live in balance with others.

(5) THROAT CHAKRA – VISHUDDHI

- My voice is necessary.
- I communicate clearly and effectively.
- Freedom is my true nature.
- I hear and speak the truth.
- Creativity flows in and through me.

(6) THIRD EYE CHAKRA – AJÑA

- I am whole and complete exactly as I am.
- Listening to my inner voice, I trust my instincts.
- I receive clear guidance for my life's journey.
- I see all things in clarity.
- I manifest my vision.

(7) CROWN CHAKRA – SAHASRARA

- I am guided by inner wisdom.
- Opening to my highest self, I live with great joy and clarity.
- I open to my highest vibration with grace.
- I am open to new ideas.
- The world is my teacher.

Sample sankalpas:

I am at ease and open to insight.

I listen before I speak.

I am enough, I have enough. (I am abundant).

I am patient and loving to myself and others.

I receive as easily as I give.

I am loving and loved.

I am successful and complete all of the tasks I begin.

I am already whole. I am already healed.

I am peace itself.

I playfully engage my creative self daily.

I am present for my _____'s health.

Example Umbrella Sankalpas

My book lands the perfect publisher.

-I write for an hour everyday.

I am healthy and strong.

-I enjoy life without sugar.

I am empowered and successful.

-I am worthy and respected.



SAMPLE STAGES

Below are samples of scripts that align with each stage of a nidrā practice. You could pull from these and mix and match to create a full script or use them to inspire your own writing!

(1) ARRIVING

- (a) Remember that yoga nidrā is about receiving, rather than doing. There is no effort. Can you take on the role of a C minus student? The effort it took you to get here and set up your props is all that's needed. Now you can just BE. Throughout this process, I'll offer you different anchors for your focus: things to notice, visualize, imagine. Each one of these anchors is optional. You might be with me the whole time and that's fine. You might zone in and out, and that's fine. You might fall asleep, and that's fine. All experiences are welcomed here.
- (b) Be okay with continuing to move and settle in for just a bit longer. Can you lift your right leg, shake it out and let it land back on the mat? Do the same with your left leg – lift, shake, stretch and settle it back down to the ground. Squeeze and release your buttocks, perhaps you are gently lifting your sacrum off the mat, just by a few millimeters and then settle it back down. And do the same with your arms. Lift the right arm, stretch, shake and ground. Lift the left arm, stretch, shake and ground. Squeeze both hands into a fist, keep squeezing, keep squeezing, even tighter and then release. Squeeze all of the muscles on your face, purse your lips, squeeze your eyes shut and then release.

Release all expectations about what's to come next. Release any tendency (innate or taught) towards trying too hard. Throughout this practice, I will offer you different anchors for your awareness—awareness of the body, of the breath, of any internal sensations. Please pick these up as you see fit. If you don't follow all of my suggestions, no worries. Take on the work of receiving, rather than spending. If you sleep, that's okay. If you zone in and out, that's okay. There is no right or wrong here, there is only being.

(c) through the koshas:

Let the physical body land. This part of us that is most accessible, most visible—the you that is your body, muscles and bones. Can you allow your muscles and bones to become heavy? Feel the weight of your body sinking into the earth. Surrender muscles, sinking down, melting off your bones into supportive earth. Your tissues softening, your patterns of holding releasing. Feel the pull of gravity as the body grows heavy and releases into the support beneath you.

Just briefly, feeling the breath. Feel the breath fill the container of your body. Let it rise and fall naturally. No changes. Perhaps noticing it settle into its own rhythm. Its own pattern.

Thoughts and mind grow dense and sink into the back of your head. Like a pebble sinking to the bottom of a lake. If thoughts are persistent, you may simply marvel at them...noticing how they drift in and out of your sight like clouds on a breezy day.

You are ultimate awareness. You can witness all of these parts of you with keen attention and with kindness. See your physical self. See you breathing self. See your thinking mind. See all of this and let it fall away...emptying it out so that what remains is your true nature.

(inspired in part by (Cullen, 2017: 36.))

(d) from Little's "śāvāsana , the ground zero practice":

Begin by lying on your back on a soft but firm floor support. Exhale deeply several times and allow the weight of your bones to drop into the floor, and in turn, to the ground below the floor. Allow the weight of your organs to sink, like leaves lowering to the bottom of a winter pond. Visualize your blood and breath settling into the back of your body. Allow your skin to spread out along the floor, so that the skin of your back body is fully in contact with the floor. Allow the weight of the back of your sacrum and the weight at the back of your skull to drop. Inhale into your back ribs and feel them expand against the floor.

(2016: 10.)

(2) HOME BASE and INNER RESOURCES

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'safety, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?
45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, this place can be your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that you are practicing in a safe place. I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

(a) as shifting inner narrative

What is your current story? Is there an inner dialogue that you fall upon regularly? Notice if there's an inner narrative you would like to nudge in another direction. For me, it's been: I'm so fatigued. I'm done with winter.

Let's adjust these inner stories:

I abide.

I have the energy I need.

I move through winter with grace.

(b) as heart-felt intention (influenced and credited to Sheila Cullen)

Notice how your awareness is likely resting somewhere in the skull—the home of the brain and the mind. Softly, encourage this awareness to drop down from the mind and into the heart centre. Your spinal column serves as a bridge between mind and heart. Use it, like an elevator shaft to travel downwards away from the busy mind. Step your mind's eye, your awareness, into the elevator and ride it down, down through the throat centre, beyond the collarbones, plunging deep into the ribcage. See yourself entering the heartspace. Take a moment to arrive, noticing any qualities here, like textures, temperatures, colours or feelings.

Make the seat of your awareness now the heart centre, take time to observe and listen intently.

30 seconds

Ask yourself: in this moment, at this breath, what is my heart requesting?

1 min

Let the voice of your heart form your sankalpa—a statement or resolve that you will carry with you into the practice. Make your sankalpa a positive statement using simple language. State your sankalpa in the present tense, as though it is already happening in your life.

If today, your heart's voice is quiet, that's okay. You can adopt the sankalpa statement:

I am receptive and open to what comes up.

Imagine that your sankalpa is reality, rather than an aspiration. Believe this to be so. What does your life look like knowing your sankalpa is true? How are your relationships? What does your body feel like? Dig into the felt experience of knowing that you have what it is you desire. Take a deep inhale and draw your sankalpa into your heart centre. As you exhale, let it move through every cell of the body. Repeat this two more times and feel it.

1 min

And now we plant our seed, our sankalpa, knowing that it is landing in fertile ground. Please repeat your sankalpa quietly in your mind three times. If you are using the sankalpa I have offered, it is: I am receptive and open to what comes up.

30 seconds

(c) as an affirmation (inspired by Kamini Desai)

As we form our intention today, know that this is about an affirmation about yourself. Something positive.

This can be hard to come by.

The exercise:

Ask your friend/family: what do I bring into your life? Into this world?

What do other people feel in your presence?

How do they say you make them feel?

What quality or experience do you want to bring to others above all else?

Use the responses you've received to form your sankalpa.

(d) as an affirmation

Notice in this moment where your awareness is landing. It could be in the tips of your fingers, in the lifting and falling of your belly, in the nostrils (at the source of your breath), or up in the skull, as an audience to the talkative mind. Wherever your awareness is, can you gently nudge it toward the heart? Literally, go there.... Crawl inwards, between the rib cage, passing by the lungs and drop yourself into the centre of your heart. Take in the scene.... Do you notice a specific colour? Or texture? Or temperature? Observe the heart space with an abundance of kindness and with an abiding curiosity. What's going on in there?

1 min

And listen to the phrase: 'I am'

'I am'

And repeat it a few times silently to yourself... I am.

Let the heart centre complete this sentence. Whatever comes to mind is correct and is the truth.

I am LOVE

I am PEACE

I am VITAL

I am WHOLE

Listen and ask: I am. Let your heart centre respond.

30 seconds

The voice of your heart will form your sankalpa. A positive and present affirmation about yourself that you will carry with you into the practice. You may have received many responses. Or perhaps tonight your heart is quiet. Both are okay. If you are open to it, feel free to use the sankalpa I am offering:

I am VITAL.

Pledge to carry this affirmation with you into the depths of the practice. This is much like planting a seed and knowing that it is landing in fertile ground. This seed will flourish. Please repeat your sankalpa quietly in your mind three times. If you are using the sankalpa I have offered, it is: I am vital.

30 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

(a) homunculus body scan

throat	first finger	left hip
tongue	second finger	right hip
teeth	third finger	left thigh
gums	fourth finger	right thigh
jaws	the whole left hand	left knee
lips	thumb of the right hand	right knee
lower lip	first finger	left lower leg
upper lip	second finger	right lower leg
face	third finger	left ankle
nose	fourth finger	right ankle
left eye	the whole right hand	toes of the left foot, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
right eye	left wrist	toes of the right foot, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
left eyebrow	right wrist	root centre
right eyebrow	left elbow	(between the sitting bones)
neck	right elbow	
thumb of the left hand	Trunk	

(b) short body scan

feel the palms of both hands	eyes	feet
feel your hands vibrant	head and	toes
with sensation	neck together	soles of the feet
arms	chest	back body
elbows	belly	front body
shoulders	back	right side body
throat centre	hips	left side body
neck	thighs	whole body (X3)
head	knees	
face	lower legs	

(c) hollows body scan

feel the hollow of the...	eyes	palms
mouth	eye sockets	armpits
tongue	brain cavity	shoulder blades
throat	hollow where the spine	lower back
nose	and skull meet	whole torso (x3)
nostrils	base of the throat	hip joints
nasal passages	chest cavity	back of knees
sinuses in the cheeks	lungs	knee joints
outer ears	belly	ankles
ear canals	pelvic bowl	arches of feet
inner ears	shoulder joints	

Unite all of the hollows together into one awareness, one feeling. Allow this blanket feeling to unfold completely.

(d) circular body scan

Our first and most formed layer is the physical sheath- the body. I will lead you through a body scan. Keep it simple. Your work is to remain still and let the consciousness arch around the body in the way a pencil dances across a sketchbook.

Map your awareness onto:

Your right hand thumb.....2nd finger...3rd finger...4th finger....5th finger....

Palm of the hand...back of the hand....wrist...forearm...elbow...upper arm...shoulder... armpit...right side waist...hip..thigh....knee...calf....ankle.... heel....sole of the foot....top of the foot...right big toe...2nd toe...3rd toe... 4th toe...5th toe

Left hand thumb.....2nd finger...3rd finger...4th finger....5th finger....

Palm of the hand...back of the hand....wrist...forearm...elbow...upper arm...shoulder... armpit... left side waist...hip..thigh....knee...calf.... ankle....heel....sole of the foot....top of the foot...left big toe...2nd toe...3rd toe... 4th toe...5th toe

Now go to the back of the body...right heel...left heel...right calf...left calf...right thigh... left thigh...right buttock...left buttock...lower back...middle back...upper back...the entire spine...the entire spine...the entire spine...right shoulder blade...left shoulder blade...back of the neck...back of the head

Top of the head...forehead...right temple...left temple...right ear...left ear...right eyebrow...left eyebrow...middle of the eyebrows...right eye...left eye...right nostril...left nostril...right cheek...left cheek...upper lip...lower lip....both lips together...chin...jaw... throat...right collarbone...left collarbone...right side of chest...left side of chest... upper abdomen...navel...lower abdomen...right groin...left groin...the pelvic floor

The whole right leg...whole right arm....the whole face...the whole head....whole left arm...whole left leg... the whole torso...the whole body...the whole body...the body.

(e) Himalayan Institute-inspired body scan

between the eyebrows
the little hollow at the base of the
throat between the collarbones
right shoulder
right elbow
right wrist
right hand thumb
index finger
middle finger
ring finger
pinky finger
wrist
elbow
shoulder
base of the throat
left shoulder
elbow
wrist
left hand thumb
index finger
middle finger
ring finger
pinky finger
wrist
elbow
shoulder
base of throat
centre of sternum bone
(the verticle bone that connects both
sides of the ribs)
inside and under the left side ribs
sternum bone
inside and under the right side ribs

sternum bone
navel
centre of pelvic floor
right hip
right knee
ankle
right big toe
second toe
third toe
fourth toe
fifth toe
ankle
knee
hip
centre of pelvic floor
left hip
knee
ankle
left big toe
second toe
third toe
fourth toe
fifth toe
ankle
knee
hip
centre of pelvic floor
navel
breast bone
base of throat
eyebrow centre
whole body

(f) The Wrap-Around Scan

Start at the back of the skull, even if you're not lying on your back, land your awareness there. Back of skull, round and heavy
From there, wrap around to notice the right ear

Right eye	Left shoulder blade	Tailbone
Right cheekbone	Left shoulder	Sacrum bone
Right nostril	Left upper arm	Back of the navel
Back of the skull	Left lower arm	centre
Left eye	Left hand, the whole	Back of the heart
Left cheekbone	left hand	Back of the throat
Left nostril	Back of the heart	Back of the skull
Both lips together	Back of the navel	Top of the skull
The upper and lower	centre	Space between the
set of teeth	Right side of torso	eyes
The jaws	Left side of torso	Throat centre
The contents of the	Sacrum bone	Heart centre
mouth	Right side hip	Navel centre
Back of skull	Right thigh	Sacrum
Back of neck	Right lower leg	Tailbone
Centre and back of the	Right foot, the whole	See the whole body
heart	right foot	
Right shoulder blade	Sacrum bone	The central axis of the
Right shoulder	Left side hip	whole body
Right upper arm	Left thigh	And the limbs
Right lower arm	Left lower leg	emanating from it
Right hand, the whole	Left foot, the whole left	
right hand	foot	
Back of the heart	Sacrum bone	

(g) Scanner Body Scan

Likened your awareness here to that of the rising sun. If you watch the sunrise you'd see its light scan across the landscape. Can you scan the light of your awareness across the front side body?

down the forehead
the ridge of the nose
the eyebrows
the eyes
cheekbones
lips
jaws
chin
front of the throat
the collarbones
slide down the wingspan to the palms
of the hands
down the front of the heart
the navel centre
the low belly
the pelvic bowl
thighs
kneecaps
shins
tops of the feet

curl around the edges of the toes, and
begin scanning the back of the body:
heels, calves, thighs, buttocks,
follow the curve of the lower back as it
ridges up into the back of the ribs

the smooth surfaces of the shoulder
blades
slide down both arms, down your
wingspan
touch the back of the palms with your
awareness
back of the neck
the ridge of the skull
top of the skull

and wrap yourself up in kind
awareness; pour your awareness
around the whole of you:
the skull
neck
arms and hands
wrapping up the torso
hips and pelvis
lower legs
the whole of both feet

the whole of you
the whole of you wrapped up in soft,
generous awareness

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

(a) gentle samma vritti (even waves)

Start first by noticing your breath. Keep it that simple. Notice the breath that is currently occupying your body.

45 seconds to 1 min

Now fine tune your awareness. Rather than watching the breath itself, can you notice the space that exists between the breath? It may last for a fraction of a second, but at the very top of the inhale, there's a pause. At the very bottom of the exhale, there's a pause. Can you watch the space between each breath?

45 seconds to 1 min

And maybe, just for a moment, you could consider extending the length of your inhale to match the length of your exhale. Can you breath be like an even wave?

45 seconds

Could you extend the duration for your pauses? Be so soft here... if you inhale is for four counts, perhaps your pause is for two. Go slow, see how it feels.

1 min

(b) sukshma nadi shodhana (subtle alternate nostril breathing)

Start by placing your awareness on your breath. Keep it simple. Watch the breath go in and watch the breath go out.

1 min

Good, now add on to the awareness: know that your breath moves in through two streams, two channels. See the breath moving in through the left and right nostrils. Breath enters the two nostrils and exits through two channels, the left and right nostrils. Watch the breath now as it moves through these two streams.

1 min

Layer on more. Imagine that the next time you exhale, that the breath is leaving the left nostril. As you inhale, it enters the left nostril. Now, the exhale comes from the right nostril. Inhale right, exhale left, inhale left, exhale right, inhale right, exhale left... keep going. Mental, alternate nostril breathing.

1 min

(6) MANOMAYA sensing opposites

There are many polarities one could work with from sensations to emotions. Below are some tried and true opposites I most commonly work with:

hot	cold
heavy	light
floating	sinking
grounded	expanded
awake	sleepy
left side body	right side body
front body	back body
left hand	right hand

(a) working with emotions

Feel the current emotion that you are working with in your life. What emotion seems to be dominant for you right now? Feel it in your body. Where does it reside? Feel it in your limbs, your bones, your organs. How does it show up? How does it feel? Does it have a temperature? Does it have a texture? Perhaps it has a colour.

And now feel the opposite of that emotion... what would the opposite emotion be for you? ...where does it reside? Feel it fully... and now go back to the original emotion—notice its sensations and where they are located....and now its opposite, going back and forth between both.

Can you now hold both of them together at the same time? How does it feel to hold them both at the same time?

(Cullen, 2017: 74.)

(7) CHIDĀKASH

(a) the meadow

Picture yourself walking now, walking barefoot toward an open meadow. This place is sparsely populated, so there is nothing to see in the distance other than open air. As you tread more deeply into this field, you feel the blades of grass becoming taller brushing first your ankles, then knees, even touching your hips in some areas. The earth beneath your feet feels supple and alive with dew. You trudge a bit further and find a clearing. You take a seat and then lie down. The view above is that of a clear night sky. It's so clear, even the stars have yet to come out. Settle into your resting place and close your eyes.

Notice that behind your eyelids, you can see the same blue-black sky that existed when your eyes were open. This internal sky is just as vast and open as the one you are lying under. This is the field for you to know. This is the mindspace or the chidākash. Keep watching, allowing your eyes to adjust. Step into the role of the witness. Can you watch this space without any expectations? Be present and be patient. Perhaps something appears...like shapes or colours or patterns. Perhaps something un-seeable arises, like emotions, sensations or memories. Perhaps nothing appears. Watch whatever rises in the same way you would observe a painting or a landscape or the open sky. Watch with abiding curiosity and a generous serving of kindness. Simply watch.

4 mins

(b) for fall

You're on a fall hike. It's the perfect late afternoon for it: there's a cooler breeze, but the heat of the sun still warms you. It's the kind of weather you feel cozy in whether you're in a sweater or t-shirt. Your feet find the worn-in dirt path as it winds its way across the roots of trees. You're careful to step over branches and rocks. You delight in the sound of leaves crunching beneath you. While you would love to take in the sights and smells of this autumnal forest, you continue on, you've got a destination in mind. Eventually, the path leads you to your landing spot: The forest clears to reveal a look out. Below you is a steep drop to a ravine. Beneath your feet, the dirt path has turned into a soft bed of grass. As you take a seat, you take in the scene. In front of you is a panoramic view. From this vantage, you can take in the entire sky, as it cycles through the colours of the sunset and eventually darkens to the blue-black hue twilight.

Close your eyes.....

River stones
Cedar tree
Full moon rising
Planet Earth from above
The smell and sound of dry
autumn leaves

Bonfire
Sunflower
Flannel sheets
Orange clouds drifting at sunset
Star filled sky
The infinite nature of you

(c) Under the surface see all of you that's in constant movement:

blood through veins in circulation, digestive organs, diaphragm, beating of heart, down to cellular level

Why should the brain be any different?

We don't ask the wind to stop blowing. Water to stop coursing. Trees to stop growing, reaching their leaves to the sun and their roots to the water. Why, my friends, do we ask the mind to stop?

JUST WATCH

Star filled sky
New moon
Chanting ohm
Endless blue sky
Horizon on the landscape

The milky way
Prairie meadow
Crickets humming
Sound of silence

(d) for winter

It's morning. You are enjoying the winter sunshine and how it casts long shadows of trees in the yard in front of you. You are sipping your morning coffee, your hands are warmed by the mug. The day looks so inviting, you pull on your warm boots and jacket and head outside.

You're immediately struck by the crispness of the air. It's just enough to nudge you into alertness, though ultimately, you are at peace with this weather. You're moving slowly across an open field. The snow is deep enough that you can look back and trace your footsteps back to your front door. You aren't sure of a destination, but the day seems to be beckoning you to explore a patch of trees up ahead.

The forest hold majestic evergreens, rising tall above you. Some of the trees and capped with snow, others look like they've been dusted with white powder. You enjoy the scents of the trees and the beautiful silence that a calm winter day affords. The snow and trees insulate you from the wind moving outside of the forest. And as you explore a little further, you see it: a calm snow owl, perched high up in a tree, looking down at you. The owl holds your gaze with kind eyes. It's presence feels you with ease and love and it's almost as if the owl is saying to you: REMEMBER. You feel compelled to move closer to its tree. With your feet at the tree's base, you lean the entire length of your spine against its trunk. You glance once more at the owl perched above you and close your eyes.

You immediately sink into an observance of what's going on behind the eyes. You are watching your inner sky. You feel so at ease with this task. You are just watching...

2-4 mins

snowy white owl
evergreen tree
falling snowflakes
holiday wreath- a never-
ending circle
emerald green ornament
mug of tea

the December moon
winter sun, reflecting
off the snow
your heart centre
this body
this room
this moment

(e) the theatre

Imagine you are walking into an empty theatre. You carefully select the row and seat you will feel most comfortable in. You take in the room: noticing the velvet, cushy seat supporting you, the stickiness of the concrete floor, the quality of light cast by the sconces that are dimly lit down each wall, the saturated red curtains that are drawn back to reveal a large screen before you. Take a seat and close your eyes.

Notice now, that you can see the empty, dark screen behind your eyelids. At first, it seems small, only the size of your forehead. But upon more inspection, you realize this screen is as vast as an Imax screen. No- even vaster...as far reaching and expansive as the universe. Let your eyes adjust to this midnight blue-black space, the chitt-akash. Concentrate on this screen and observe any phenomena that manifests within it; perhaps it's colours, patterns or light. Perhaps you see nothing at all – and that is okay. Continue to bear witness, to observe, to be the watcher. Be radically non-interfering with whatever rises. Practice detached awareness. If any subtle images make themselves known, you simply notice them and nothing more. If today there is a lack of images, you simply notice this and nothing more. If thoughts occur, let them come and go. Continue to watch this dark space.

2 to 4 mins

flickering candle
starlit night
a yogi in deep meditation
planet earth from above
sunlight streaming through
a window
a ship's anchor, plunging into
the ocean
large tree with thick roots
the sound of my voice
white clouds

a hot air balloon, rising
dark rich earth
lava, spilling out from an
active volcano
the January moon
a footprint in the snow
a quiet, frozen lake
steam rising from a mug of tea
your body lying on the floor

(f) Revisit the canvas of your experience. Notice the texture and quality of your muscles and bones. Notice the colour of your breath. And know that each experience you've had up to this point has created an imprint, a pattern, a mental image. You are a living collage. Slowly, scan from the soles of your feet, all the way up to the skull. Take in the art that is you.

And land behind your eyelids. The yogis called this the chidākash- the mind space- this is your inner blank canvas. This space behind the eyes is as large as the night sky and holds the possibility for your own inner artistry. It is here that you may observe phenomenon: shapes, patterns, light, shadow. Let your eyes adjust. And watch.

elephants
running horse
house with many windows
a dollar bill
Egyptian hieroglyphics
green circle
red square
eye
pyramid
crossword puzzle

canvas
texture
pattern, on top of pattern, on
top of pattern
you
your body
lying on the floor
stillness
silent

(g) sample imagery from Swami Satyananda Saraswati:

burning candle
endless desert
Egyptian pyramid
torrential rain
snow capped mountains
red clouds drifting
stars at night

full moon
wind from the sea
wave breaking on a
deserted beach
(1998: 86)

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

(a) You already know.

Lean into this connection with your deepest self- where you hold the subtle knowledge that you are that which you wish to be. That you are complete and whole. That nothing can be added to you or taken away from you to enhance your perfection. It just is.

(b) Wherever you are, is perfect.

Whatever you are doing is perfect. Change nothing. Bask in this feeling of bliss-ness. Your physical body is here. Your breathing body is here. You are both spacious and grounded. You are safe and secure. You are vital. You are all of these things.

Is there any difference between the pulse that is you and the pulse of the universe?
Is there any difference between you and the other people in this room, in this city,
on this planet?

If planting your intention, your sankalpa, is like dropping a seed in soil, know that your soil is at its most fertile. You have tended and tilled the earth, preparing it to receive and nourish new life. You are planting a seed here knowing it will flourish. Drop back down into your heart centre and become aware of any subtle shifts here. Recall your

affirmation, your sankalpa. Repeat it three times, this time, knowing that it really is the truth- your truth. Take your time to repeat you sankalpa once more, with meaning.

(9) RETURN

(a) Taking time with the return journey. Go slow. First, allow your sense of hearing to wake up. Let your ears wrap around the sound of my voice. Let your ears reach out for sounds from beyond this room. Start to listen.

Awaken the sense of touch. Notice how the air that surrounds you feels as it hits your skin. Notice how it feels as you breath it in and out.

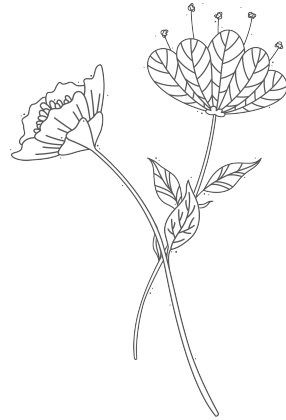
Just because the eyes are closed doesn't mean the seeing stops. Visualize the four walls, the ceiling and the floor of this space. And see where you are within it. See your body, lying on the floor, supported by props. Can you see yourself? And watch as the breath starts to deepen. Taking deeper breaths that move the ribcage and belly.

And you've been still for some time, so make your first few movements small ones. Swallow a few times. Nod the skull left to right. Slide the eyebrows up and down. Part the jaw and lips. Graze the edges of your fingers with your thumb. Wake up the toes. Ankles. Wrists. Until eventually, you may stretch your arms overhead and take a lengthening inhale, and an exhale to release it all.

(b) Return slowly. See yourself resting in this shape, on your mat, in this room. Notice the easefulness of your bones, muscles, fascia, of the muscles that govern your brow, temples and jaw. See softness in your hands, rootedness in your feet and lower limbs.

Observe intimately the quality of breath, the pace of your pulse, the beating of your heart. Feel these processes working in concert, in perfect harmony with one another.

Zoom in to the feeling of your breath flowing in and out of your nostrils. And as the breath begins to deepen, use it to breathe life into the physical body. Your body is relaxed and lying on the floor. Feel the container of your skin and the clothes and props that are touching you. Feel the temperature of the air as it hits your skin. Notice the heaviness of your body as it rests on the floor and take your awareness into all the points that are touching the floor: the back of your heels, thighs, buttocks, shoulder blades, arms, hands and skull. Do not open your eyes yet, but visualize the surrounding room- the four walls, ceiling and floor. Imagine where you are in the room and the other objects and people



SAMPLE SCRIPTS

GENERIC SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

Give yourself permission in this space and time to do absolutely nothing. Can you commit to not making anything happen? Can you commit to the open act of receiving? Empty your mind of expectations, anticipations or thoughts about what's to come next. Instead, establish a soft intention that you will be conscious through this whole process. Be productive by doing nothing. Be restful, while still remaining alert.

(2) HOME BASE

Know that you are practicing tonight with like-minded individuals. You are practicing here in community.

And now imagine yourself in a location where you feel most at ease. This place is your own personal haven. It may be a place you know well or that you have yet to visit. It may be in nature or a place indoors. There is no wrong answer here. Choose your personal place and make it home. See yourself here.

Take the time to notice who is here with you. Are you alone or with loved ones? Is there an animal with you? Engage your senses and imbue this scene with as much detail as you can. What do you see, hear and smell? What is the temperature? What are the textures?

Remember this place and know that at any time during this nidrā session, if you feel lost or uncomfortable, you can return to your haven.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

The practice of yoga nidrā begins now. Gently remind yourself that you are awake and aware, and that your effort is to be effortless.

Notice how your awareness is likely resting somewhere in the skull—the home of the brain and the mind. Softly, encourage this awareness to drop down from the mind and into the heart centre. Your spinal column serves as a bridge between mind and heart. Use it, like an elevator shaft to travel downwards away from the busy mind. Step your mind's eye, your awareness, into the elevator and ride it down, down through the throat centre, beyond the collarbones, plunging deep into the ribcage. See yourself entering the heartspace. Take a moment to arrive, noticing any qualities here, like textures, temperatures, colours or feelings.

Make the seat of your awareness now the heart centre, take time to observe and listen intently.

30 sec

Ask yourself: in this moment, at this breath, what is my heart requesting?

1 min

Let the voice of your heart form your sankalpa—a statement or resolve that you will carry with you into the practice. Make your sankalpa a positive statement using simple language. State your sankalpa in the present tense, as though it is already happening in your life. If today, your heart's voice is quiet, that's okay. You can adopt the sankalpa statement:

I am receptive and open to what comes up.

Imagine that your sankalpa is reality, rather than an aspiration. Believe this to be so. What does your life look like knowing your sankalpa is true? How are your relationships? What does your body feel like? Dig into the felt experience of knowing that you have what it is you desire. Take a deep inhale and draw your sankalpa into your heart centre. As you exhale, let it move through every cell of the body. Repeat this two more times and feel it.

1 min

And now we plant our seed, our sankalpa, knowing that it is landing in fertile ground. Please repeat your sankalpa quietly in your mind three times. If you are using the sankalpa I have offered, it is: I am receptive and open to what comes up.

30 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

Now, I will lead you through a body scan. Your task is simple, as you hear parts of the body named, drop your awareness there. The pace will be quick, and this isn't to throw you off, but rather, to allow you to notice the mobility of your awareness.

Bring your awareness to...

the throat	second finger	right thigh
tongue	third finger	left thigh
teeth	fourth finger	right knee
gums	the whole right hand	left knee
the jaws (upper & lower)	left thumb	right lower leg
lips	left first finger	left lower leg
lower lip	second finger	right ankle
upper lip	third finger	left ankle
your face	fourth finger	right big toe
nose	the whole left hand	2 nd toe...3 rd toe...4 th toe
right eye	right wrist	pinky toe
left eye	left wrist	left big toe
right eyebrow	right elbow	2 nd toe...3 rd toe...4 th toe
left eyebrow	left elbow	pinky toe
your neck	the trunk	the root centre between
right thumb	right hip	your sitting bones
first finger	left hip	

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

Come back to the feeling of earth-boundedness, of downward energy. This current that draws us downwards is called APANA. The current that pulls us skywards is called PRĀNA.

Now notice your breath. Feel your natural breath, the steady, easeful breath you've brought with you into this room. Without altering it, can you simply bear witness to your breath. Each inhalation is a manifestation of prāna, of upwards energy. Each exhalation, apana, downwards energy.

1 min

Link a simple word or mantra to your breath. Repeat these words silently for the next moment. With each inhale, silently say 'HERE.' With each exhale, 'NOW.'

2 min

Good. Let go of your mantra. Breath normally. Breath freely. Expanding upwardly as you inhale, returning home as you exhale. Perhaps reminding yourself here:
'I am awake and aware. I am practicing yoga nidrā.'

(6) MANOMAYA

As you see your body resting on the support of your mat, awaken the feeling of heaviness, whatever this means to you. Perhaps your body grows heavy. Feel the head heavy, the arms, the torso, the legs, the feet, spine. The whole body is heavy, heavy and sinking into earth.

30 sec

And now, how would you experience weightlessness? As though the body was made of cotton. Floating limbs and torso, your hands, feet and skull floating as though filled with helium. Feel the body as weightless.

30 sec

And now the body is heavy again. Body filled with cement – heavy and sinking deeply into earth. Bones heavy, organs heavy, muscles heavy. Body heavy.

30 sec

And now the body floating – like a transparent bubble floating on the breeze, body weightless....body unbounded and spacious, as casual as a spring breeze.

30 sec

Go back and forth now, feel weighted....and now feel weightless...heaviness...lightness...and can you now feel heaviness and lightness at the same time? Feel both at the same time. How does it feel to be both heavy and light at the same time?

1 min

(7) CHIDĀKASH

Imagine you are walking into an empty theatre. You carefully select the row and seat you will feel most comfortable in. You take in the room: noticing the velvet, cushy seat supporting you, the stickiness of the concrete floor, the quality of light cast by the sconces that are dimly lit down each wall, the saturated red curtains that are drawn back to reveal a large screen before you. Take a seat and close your eyes.

Notice now, that you can see the empty, dark screen behind your eyelids. At first, it seems small, only the size of your forehead. But upon more inspection, you realize this screen is as vast as an Imax screen. No- even vaster...as far reaching and expansive as the universe. Let your eyes adjust to this midnight blue-black space, the chitt-akash. Concentrate on this screen and observe any phenomena that manifests within it; perhaps it's colours, patterns or light. Perhaps you see nothing at all – and that is okay. Continue to bear witness, to observe, to be the watcher. Be radically non-interfering with whatever rises. Practice detached awareness. If any subtle images make themselves known, you simply notice them and nothing more. If today there is a lack of images, you simply notice this and nothing more. If thoughts occur, let them come and go. Continue to watch this dark space.

4 mins

flickering candle
starlit night
a yogi in deep meditation
planet earth from above
the January moon
a footprint in the snow
a quiet, frozen lake
steam rising from a mug of tea
your body lying on the floor
white clouds

a hot air balloon, rising
dark rich earth
lava, spilling out from an active
volcano
sunlight streaming through a window
a ship's anchor, plunging into the
ocean
large tree with thick roots
the sound of my voice

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

Come back to your breath. Witness the breath as it exists now. Witness the body as it exists now. You are awake. You are aware. You are practicing yoga nidrā. Lean into this moment and feel grateful. Everything is exactly as it should be. There is nowhere to go. There is nothing to do. Be here now.

As you gather up any sensations here, feelings of ease, contentedness, peace- know that these qualities have not come from some place outside of you. Rather, you ARE these qualities. Let this practice remind you of this simple, yet important truth. Everything you truly need, you already have. The person you want to be, you already are.

From this place of fullness, knowing that you are enough, come back to your intention, your sankalpa. Inhale this affirmation into your heart and as you exhale, let it enter into every cell of the body.

Please repeat your sankalpa three times. Repeat it silently now as the truth – your truth. Feel full. Feel grounded. Feel thankful.

(9) RETURN

Return slowly. See yourself resting in this shape, on your mat, in this room. Notice the easefulness of your bones, muscles, fascia, of the muscles that govern your brow, temples and jaw. See softness in your hands, rootedness in your feet and lower limbs. Observe intimately the quality of breath, the pace of your pulse, the beating of your heart. Feel these processes working in concert, in perfect harmony with one another. Zoom in to the feeling of your breath flowing in and out of your nostrils. And as the breath begins to deepen, use it to breathe life into the physical body. Your body is relaxed and lying on the floor. Feel the container of your skin and the clothes and props that are touching you. Feel the temperature of the air as it hits your skin. Notice the heaviness of your body as it rests on the floor and take your awareness into all the points that are touching the floor: the back of your heels, calves, thighs, buttocks, ribcage, shoulder blades, arms, hands and skull. Do not open your eyes yet, but visualize the surrounding room- the four walls, ceiling and floor. Imagine where you are in the room and the other objects and people that here are around you. Lie quietly until you feel the impulse to move. Use breathe and movement to reanimate the body. And start slowly...moving your hands and feet. Be gentle. Take your time. There is no hurry. When you are ready, roll to your right side.

HA-THA SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

Release all expectations about what's to come next. Release any tendency (innate or taught) towards trying too hard. Throughout this practice, I will offer you different anchors for your awareness—awareness of the body, of the breath, of any internal sensations. Please pick these up as you see fit. If you don't follow all of my suggestions, no worries. Take on the work of receiving, rather than spending. If you sleep, that's okay. If you zone in and out, that's okay. There is no right or wrong here, there is only being.

(2) HOME BASE

Know that the space you are in is a contained one. I am here keeping time. For the duration of this practice, there is nothing for you to do, other than to listen.

And bring to mind a place where you feel most at ease, most comfortable. This may be a place you know well, it may be a fictitious place. There is no wrong answer. The place that you are calling to mind is your home base. Layer on some details here: are there any creature comforts like cozy furniture, or friends, or animals? Make this place feel real to you, right now. And know that at any point during this practice if you feel lost or uncomfortable, this place is available to you. Return here as much as you need. If you're open to it, allow yourself to feel cared for through my words, through the experience of this practice.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

The practice of yoga nidrā begins now. Softly, remind yourself that you are awake and aware and that you are here to receive.

Notice in this moment where your awareness is landing. It could be in the tips of your fingers, in the lifting and falling of your belly, in the nostrils (at the source of your breath), or up in the skull, as an audience to the talkative mind. Wherever your awareness is, can you gently nudge it toward the heart? Literally, go there.... Crawl inwards, between the rib cage, passing by the lungs and drop yourself into the centre of your heart. Take in the scene.... Do you notice a specific colour? Or texture? Or temperature? Observe the heart space with an abundance of kindness and with an abiding curiosity. What's going on in there?

1 min

And listen to the phrase: 'I am'

'I am'

And repeat it a few times silently to yourself... I am.

Let the heart centre complete this sentence. Whatever comes to mind is correct and is the truth.

I am LOVE

I am PEACE

I am VITAL

I am WHOLE

Listen and ask: I am. Let your heart centre respond.

30 seconds

The voice of your heart will form your sankalpa. A positive and present affirmation about yourself that you will carry with you into the practice. You may have received many responses. Or perhaps tonight your heart is quiet. Both are okay. If you are open to it, feel free to use the sankalpa I am offering:
I am VITAL.

Pledge to carry this affirmation with you into the depths of the practice. This is much like planting a seed and knowing that it is landing in fertile ground. This seed will flourish. Please repeat your sankalpa quietly in your mind three times. If you are using the sankalpa I have offered, it is: I am vital.
30 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

Next, I will lead your awareness throughout the body in the form of a body scan. You will visit each part of the body as you hear it named. Rather than lingering, enjoy the pace and mobility of your awareness, let it move freely. Bring your awareness to...

the throat
tongue
teeth
gums
jaws
lips
lower lip
upper lip
face
nose
left eye
right eye
left eyebrow
right eyebrow
neck
left thumb
first finger
second finger
third finger
fourth finger
the whole left hand
right thumb
first finger
second finger

third finger
fourth finger
the whole right hand
left wrist
right wrist
left elbow
right elbow
the trunk, left side and right side
left hip
right hip
left thigh
right thigh
left knee
right knee
left lower leg
right lower leg
left ankle
right ankle
left side toes, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
right side toes, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
root centre (between the sitting bones)

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

sukshma nadi shodhana:

Start by placing your awareness on your breath. Keep it simple. Watch the breath go in and watch the breath go out.
1 min

Good, now add on to the awareness: know that your breath moves in through two streams, two channels. See the breath moving in through the left and right nostrils. Breath enters the two nostrils and exits through two channels, the left and right nostrils. Watch the breath now as it moves through these two streams.

1 min

Layer on more. Imagine that the next time you exhale, that the breath is leaving the left nostril. As you inhale, it enters the left nostril. Now, the exhale comes from the right nostril. Inhale right, exhale left, inhale left, exhale right, inhale right, exhale left... keep going. Mental, alternate nostril breathing.

1 min

(6) MANOMAYA

Visualize the spinal column. Your spine is the perfect through-line, dividing your body between left and right halves.

Imagine now that you could highlight just the right side of your body. Split yourself down the middle and give awareness to the right side. Breathe through the right side nostril, feel the pulse in the right side limbs.

Awaken the feeling of the sun. This is your solar side. Feel warmth. Feel activated. Feel solar.

30 seconds

Now, highlight left side body. Pay attention to left side body. Breathe through the left side nostril, follow any sensations on left side body.

This is your lunar side. Feel left side body and imagine moon. Perhaps cold, glowing and spacious. Feel lunar.

30 seconds

Go back to the right side, the sun side. Feel action. Feel energy. Feel vitality.

30 seconds

And now back to your lunar side. Feel receptive. Passive, rather than active. Embody the moon.

30 seconds

Dance between the two... you are sun. you are moon.....you are solar.....you are lunar.....you are masculine.....you are feminine..... you are all of these things. Can you feel all of these things in your one self?

1 min

(7) CHIDĀKASH

Imagine you are walking into an empty theatre. You carefully select the row and seat you will feel most comfortable in. You take in the room: noticing the velvet, cushy seat supporting you, the stickiness of the concrete floor, the quality of light cast by the

sconces that are dimly lit down each wall, the saturated red curtains that are drawn back to reveal a large screen before you. Take a seat and close your eyes.

Notice now, that you can see the empty, dark screen behind your eyelids. At first, it seems small, only the size of your forehead. But upon more inspection, you realize this screen is as vast as an Imax screen. No- even vaster...as far reaching and expansive as the universe. Let your eyes adjust to this midnight blue-black space, the chitt-akash. Concentrate on this screen and observe any phenomena that manifests within it; perhaps it's colours, patterns or light. Perhaps you see nothing at all – and that is okay. Continue to bear witness, to observe, to be the watcher. Be radically non-interfering with whatever rises. Practice detached awareness. If any subtle images make themselves known, you simply notice them and nothing more. If today there is a lack of images, you simply notice this and nothing more. If thoughts occur, let them come and go. Continue to watch this dark space.

4 mins

blazing sun
glowing moon
cheetah, sprinting
sloth, lounging
red circle

blue square
a yogi, seated in meditation
spinal column
right hand
left hand
your body, lying on the floor

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

Draw forward your sankalpa. Remember the statement you affirmed about yourself. Rather than remembering, embody it. This is true. You are what you say you are. You already are what you aspire to be.

Repeat it three times.....

(9) RETURN

Come back to seeing and feeling the spinal column. And shift your awareness to your left side body. Start to wake up the left side body. Feel the left hand vibrant with sensation. And the left fingers begin to wiggle. Left foot and leg wake up. Now awaken the right side a little more than the left. Feel the right hand vibrant with sensation. The right fingers wake up, the leg, the foot. Wake up left side. And wake up right side....

EARTH ELEMENT SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

Imagine that you are watching yourself here, as you begin this practice. Visualize this room: the four walls, the ceiling, the floor. Now visualize the mat and props that are supporting you. See yourself as you rest here on the floor. See your clothing, where your skin touches the air, see the presence of ease or tension on your face, see even the hair as it exists on your head.

And then zoom in to the outward curves that exist throughout your body. All of the curves where your body reaches in connection to the earth. Start at your skull, notice how your skull curves outwards and connects your occiput ridge to the blanket beneath you. Scan along the back ribcage, the flat surfaces of your shoulder blades that reach down and touch the earth. The backs of the shoulders, upper arms, forearms and palms. Notice the ridge of your seat and gently nudge/rock or squeeze and release the buttocks to gain further intimacy with the supportive earth. Feel the roundedness of your hamstrings, calves, the backs of your heels as they touch the mat.

Imagine the earth, the soil beneath you. Drop your vision down beyond this wooden floor, through the concrete foundation of this building, beyond the pipes, plumbing and electrical wires, beyond the earth's snowy layer and deep into the rich, dormant, soil of the earth. Dig in, like you're plunging your clean hands into fresh soil. You are earth bound. You are grounded. You are connected.

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'familiarity, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?
45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

If the process of yoga nidrā is like preparing a plot of earth to become a garden. Your intention for practice today is the seed. Scan the wisdom of your body, listen to the quiet voice of your heart... what is the seed you want to plant? What would you like to see more of in your life?

1 min

Form your intention in the present tense, as though it is already happening for you. Hold this intention like seeds in the palm of your hand. And if today, the heart's voice is quiet, you are welcome to use the following intention:

The earth supports me and meets my needs.

Please go ahead and repeat your intention three times. Speak it into the earth.
Speak it into existence.

30 to 45 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

Bring your awareness to...

the throat	second finger	right thigh
tongue	third finger	left thigh
teeth	fourth finger	right knee
gums	the whole right hand	left knee
the jaws (upper & lower)	left thumb	right lower leg
lips	left first finger	left lower leg
lower lip	second finger	right ankle
upper lip	third finger	left ankle
your face	fourth finger	right big toe
nose	the whole left hand	2 nd toe...3 rd toe...4 th toe
right eye	right wrist	pinky toe
left eye	left wrist	left big toe
right eyebrow	right elbow	2 nd toe...3 rd toe...4 th toe
left eyebrow	left elbow	pinky toe
your neck	the trunk	the root centre between
right thumb	right hip	your sitting bones
first finger	left hip	

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

Notice your natural easy breath. Steady unforced breath. Feel the breath flowing through you easily, rhythmically. Now imagine the breath flowing in through the soles of your feet, as though your feet were open – like a mouth – drawing breath in. And now as you inhale, breath flows through the soles of your feet into your ankles and calves...feet and lower legs filled with easy breath. Breath like a wave filling legs...and then as you inhale breath fills feet, calves, thighs and hips – filling your lower body with easeful breath. And now as this breath flows, you notice that it is the colour of earth: deep, rich, red earth. And that earth colour becomes a mist that flows in and out with the breath. As you inhale, sense its steadiness and smoothness expanding upward and outward. As you breathe out, feel it radiating back downward filling your whole body with a sense of steadiness and ease.

Soothing, deep and earthy red flows in and out. Feel the rhythm and ease as this steadiness permeates your whole being.

(6) MANOMAYA

Begin to notice sensations. Feel the body in connection to the earth. You are grounded. You are contained and holding potential, much like a small seed. Feel the body, grounded.

1 min

And now awaken the feeling of spaciousness. You are spacious and ever-expanding. Your limbs reach out from the torso. The boundary of your blurs, as you swell towards the four corners of this room. Feel the body, spacious.

1 min

The body is grounded again. Formed with in the confines of the skin. Connected to earth, and small.

30 seconds

Now the body is expansive and expanding. Feel the real estate that you are occupying growing, and taking up space. Body expanding.

30 seconds

Dance between the two. Body is grounded and contained..... body is expansive..... small and earth-bound.... Ever-reaching, ever-growing. Can you hold the two? Can you be both grounded and expanded? How does it feel to hold these two qualities in one body?

45 seconds

(7) CHIDĀKASH

Picture yourself walking now, walking barefooted toward an open meadow. This place is sparsely populated, so there is nothing to see in the distance other than open air. As you tread more deeply into this field, you feel the blades of grass becoming taller brushing first your ankles, then knees, even touching your hips in some areas. The earth beneath your feet feels supple and alive with dew. You trudge a bit further and find a clearing. You take a seat and then lie down. The view above is that of a clear night sky. It's so clear, even the stars have yet to come out. Settle into your resting place and close your eyes.

Notice that behind your eyelids, you can see the same blue-black sky that existed when your eyes were open. This internal sky is just as vast and open as the one you are lying under. This is the field for you to know. This is the mindspace or the chitt akash. Keep watching, allowing your eyes to adjust. Step into the role of the witness. Can you watch this space without any expectations? Be present and be patient. Perhaps something appears...like shapes or colours or patterns. Perhaps you can be open to witnessing other things like emotions, sensations or memories. Perhaps nothing appears. Watch whatever rises in the same way you would observe a painting or a landscape or the open sky. Watch with abiding curiosity and a generous serving of kindness. Simply watch.

4 mins

dark rich earth
elephant walking
heavy rubber boots
full moon rising
the sound of branches cracking
 in the wind
river stones
cedar tree
mountain range
planet earth from above

Egyptian pyramids
lime green plant shoots
the smell of wet dirt
Stonehenge
the scent of pine
a sack of copper coins
feet standing in mud
bones
deep well

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

The process of yoga nidrā is much like preparing a plot of land to become a garden. Know that your garden is tended, tilled and ready to receive life. Now, there is nothing to do. Simply drop your seeds and allow them to flourish. Repeat your intention three times more.

45 seconds to 1 min

(9) RETURN

Coming back slowly, and in the same way you started: Zoom in to the feeling of your breath flowing in and out of your nostrils. And as the breath begins to deepen, use it to breathe life into the physical body. Your body is relaxed and lying on the floor. Feel the container of your skin and the clothes and props that are touching you. Feel the temperature of the air as it hits your skin. Notice the heaviness of your body as it rests on the floor and take your awareness into all the points that are touching the floor: the back of your heels, calves, thighs, buttocks, ribcage, shoulder blades, arms, hands and skull. Do not open your eyes yet, but visualize the surrounding room- the four walls, ceiling and floor. Imagine where you are in the room and the other objects and people that here are around you. Lie quietly until you feel the impulse to move. Use breath and movement to reanimate the body. And start slowly...moving your hands and feet. Be gentle. Take your time. There is no hurry. When you are ready, roll to your right side.

bhu mudra: Peace fingers plug into lap or the floor

WATER ELEMENT SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVE

Where does water manifest in your body? 60% of your body is water. It's in your tear drops, the fluid that surrounds your joints, as it moves in your bloodstream, creates digestive acids in your organs. Down to the cellular level, you are water. Water is everywhere.

Notice the ebbs and flows of your being. The movement of your thoughts. The movement of your breath. Your pulse. The inner movement that is ever present. Like water, we are always moving. We hold and experience our own tide.

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'safety, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?

45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

Can you be loose with your intention today? Let it flow freely like water. Drop your affirmation like a penny into a wishing well.

If you are working with an intention, please repeat it here three times to yourself. If you would like an intention to work with, please repeat the following:

I move with the tides of my life.

30 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

Allow your awareness to dance around the body. Move like a wave, or a running stream. Let your awareness be like water.

Feel the hollow of the...

mouth
tongue
throat
nose
nostrils
nasal passages
sinuses in the cheeks
outer ears
ear Canals
inner ears
eyes
eye sockets
brain cavity
hollow where the spine and
skull meet
the shoulder blades

base of the throat
chest cavity
lungs
belly
pelvic bowl
shoulder joints
palms
elbows
armpits
lower back
whole torso X3
hip joints
back of the knees
knee joints
ankles
arches of the feet

Unite all of the hollows together into one awareness, one feeling. Allow this blanket feeling to unfold completely.

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

Samma vritti

Take note of the breath you've brought with you into this room, occupying this body. Notice how the wave of your breath rises and falls like the tide pulling in and out of shore. Can you simply enjoy being in the presence of your breath? Enjoy the wave-like nature of each passing inhale and each passing exhale.

1 min

Good. Stay with this, or if you would like to, add on. Notice the length of your inhalation. Notice without changing it. And now notice the length of your exhalation. You could consider evening out the length of your breath, so that your exhale is a mirror image of your inhale. Even out the waves of your breath. Try this.

1 min

(6) MANOMAYA

Like water, you can take on many qualities. Embrace and experience these qualities as different manifestations of you.

Can you feel solid and dense like an iceberg? Whatever this means to you... Perhaps unmovable, unshakeable and formed.

30 sec

Now wake up the qualities of a rushing river. Moving and full of energy. Can you feel like a stream, having just come out of the spring thaw. Feel the movement of water within you.

30 sec

Now your experience is so subtle... the water in you has become as invisible as vapour. Feel your experience getting lighter, moving still but floating. You are vapour.

30 sec

And can you feel all of these qualities at once? Solid like an iceberg, energetic and moving like a river, and as subtle as vapour. You are all of these things in one body.

(7) CHIDĀKASH

Picture yourself lying on the earth, You are near a body of water, perhaps a lake or a pond. The night is so still you can see the full moon reflecting off the surface of the water. As you watch with more intent, you notice the surface of the water is much like the vast night sky. Continue to watch. Perhaps as you hear these objects named, you'll see them appear before you. Perhaps you'll notice nothing. There is nothing to do here...just watch and listen.

still pond
salmon jumping
waves crashing
on the beach
dewdrops on
a spider's web
steaming teapot
river running
raindrops on your cheeks
goldfish swimming
bird bathing

full moon
lotus flower
sunset over the ocean
ice crystals on
the window
cows being milked
deer drinking at the river
your breath on a
winter walk
slow boat moving through a canal
babbling brook

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

You are water. You are fluid. You move with ease through the ebbs and flows of your life's journey. You hold life's experiences in the same way a riverbed holds a river. Bathe in this fact. And from this place, repeat your intention.

30-45 sec

(9) RETURN

Perhaps after time being still, the body feels more like an iceberg than a moving stream. Can you be slow and deliberate with the thaw? Swallow a few times and bring awareness to your throat. Move the teeth, gums and tongue. Slide the eyebrows up and down the face. When you are ready for larger movements, make them..... eventually, come to seated.

apas/jala mudra: Tip of pinky finger & thumb connect (Neptune's trident)

FIRE ELEMENT SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

Feel yourself spreading out across the mat, across the floor. Take up some space. And much like you've spread out your blanket, can you spread out a blanket of gratitude. Take a moment and gather up all of the things that are worth being grateful for. These can be small and mundane, or big and important. What are all the things, seen and unseen, what's gone unnoticed that allowed you to be here? [Examples: salt on sidewalk, the TTC driver who got you here safely, affording this cost/time, someone watching your pet or children to be here, etc.]

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'familiarity, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?

45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

The fire element is about will power. It is about doing, asserting and manifesting. Call to mind a time when you felt most confident in your actions—be it at work, in your relationships, maybe in your yoga practice. Hold that energy, that feeling of ability and let it radiate through your entire body.

Listen to the following phrase, and then repeat it three times. Make this your affirmation for today's practice:

I honor the power within me.

(4) BODY SCAN

Fire is about vision, sight, the ability to see. As I name locations in the body, can you see? Can you drop your awareness into each part of yourself?

the throat	third finger
tongue	fourth finger
teeth	the whole right hand
gums	left wrist
jaws	right wrist
lips	left elbow
lower lip	right elbow
upper lip	the trunk, left side and right side
face	left hip
nose	right hip
left eye	left thigh
right eye	right thigh
left eyebrow	left knee
right eyebrow	right knee
neck	left lower leg
left thumb	right lower leg
first finger	left ankle
second finger	right ankle
third finger	left side toes, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
fourth finger	right side toes, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
the whole left hand	root centre (between the sitting bones)
right thumb	
first finger	
second finger	

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

Imagine where in the body fire manifests: The fire of our digestive system. The fire of our brain, where it manifests as the electricity between our neurons. The process of vision, receiving light and assigning meaning. All in fractions of a second. We move at light speed.

Basking in the glow of your own inner fire, repeat the following mantra: I act. I can.
1 to 2 mins

(6) MANOMAYA

Imagine that the fire within you could take on the quality of a flickering candle flame. Strong and steady, but controlled. Unwavering like a candle flame in a windless place. What would that feel like in your body, muscles, and bones?
30 seconds

And now imagine a massive bonfire- the kind that feels almost out of control. There's height, width, and energy in this blazing bonfire. Can you feel the heat? The power of it? How does that land in you as sensation?
30 seconds

And then what if you could embody both? Can you feel as steady and reliable as a candle flame, and as expansive and powerful as a blazing bonfire? Be both, at the exact same time. You can be both at the exact same time.
40 seconds

(7) CHIDĀKASH

You are sitting around a bonfire. Your senses delight in this scene: feeling the heat of the flames against your feet and legs, hearing the crackle and pop of burning kindling, your nostrils pick up the scent of smoke. Your eyes dazzle as they take in the flickering flames. Stare into this fire for one more moment. Now close your eyes. For a moment, you can still see the bonfire behind closed eyes. Let the shadows of the flames dance behind your eyelids. As the flames disappate, you realize that what you are seeing is a vast as the night sky. You continue to watch, with clarity, you are open to what comes up.
2-4mins

sunrise over the ocean
bonfire
summer at noontime
crackling logs
sunset over the prairie
sunflower

a spinning rainbow coloured windmill
candle flame
sunbeams through the window
flannel sheets
tiger
lightning in the distance

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

You are capable. It is your right to act. Any task you start, you accomplish with ease. You are a well-tended fire burning with confidence and sustainability. Whatever stories you've been telling yourself, they are just that, stories. You realize that you are bigger than that. You are free from that. That there's choice about how you occupy this body. This world.

From this place of confidence, of knowingness, please repeat your sankalpa three times more.
30 seconds

(9) RETURN

Awaken your inner vision one last time and use it to orient yourself to the room you're in. Find yourself in this room, on the floor and watch as the energy of your body starts to wake up. Wake up with breath. Wake up with movement. Wake up with sound...perhaps a sigh or two. Continue to go slow and wake up....

Surya mudra: thumb on second joint of ring finger

AIR ELEMENT SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

See yourself arriving here and settling into the support of the ground. Feel the support of the ground beneath you. And now notice the air around you. Notice the temperature. Is there stillness or is there a breeze? Can you detect a level of humidity, or does the air feel warm and dry? And now notice your interaction with air as it enters your body. Notice your breath. Can you feel the breath entering at the nostrils? Bring your awareness right to the tip of your nose. *Pause.*

Now bring your awareness to the ribcage. How does air interact with the ribs? Feel them swell towards all four corners of this room with the inhale. Watch them fall back to their home base with the exhale. *Pause.*

And last, bring your awareness to the belly. The low belly, just south of the navel. Can you feel the breath here? Notice the belly rise with the inhale and fall with the exhale. Everyday you are surrounded by air, both inside and out.

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'stillness, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?

45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that you are practicing in a caring place. I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

See your awareness like the SKY. The sky is simply perfect capacity for whatever is moving through it. It is totally allowing of whatever comes and goes through its space. The sky, by its nature, has no preference for clouds over lightning, birds over planes or sun over rain. The sky's nature is to be unconditional capacity for everything to be as it

is. Nothing is labeled as 'good' or 'bad'. Can you embody the sky-like nature of you? You are infinite in the experiences you can hold, but ultimately, you are the unchanging sky, whether there is rain or sunshine, clouds, or open space.

The intentions offered today can be:

There is an infinite supply of patience.

OR

I am spacious like the sky.

Please pick the intention that speaks to you and repeat it three times silently to yourself.

(4) BODY SCAN

Every part of us has the capacity to hold air, to hold space, to move and create more of it. See your body as the container, see the air (oxygen and carbon dioxide) within you.

Start first by feeling the hollow of the....	chest cavity
mouth	lungs
tongue	belly
throat	pelvic bowl
nose	shoulder joints
nostrils	palms
nasal passages	elbows
sinuses in the cheeks	armpits
outer ears	shoulder blades
ear canals	lower back
inner Ears	whole torso X3
eyes	hip joints
eye sockets	back of the knees
brain cavity	knee joints
hollow where the spine and the skull meet	ankles
base of the throat	arches of the feet

Unite all of the hollows together into one awareness, one feeling. Allow this blanket feeling to unfold completely. You are both holding and surrounded by air.

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

prāna/apana

Imagine that your nostrils relocated to the soles of your feet. Start your breath here. Inhale from the soles of the feet all the way up to the crown of the head. As you exhale, the breath follows the reverse journey: exhale from the crown of the head, and out to the soles of the feet

1 min

vyana

Good. Now let's position our nostrils in the location of the belly button. See your breath entering through the core of the body (naval centre) and let it radiate out through the limbs and crown. Inhale through the centre, expanding through the limbs, and exhale from the centre.

1 min

(6) MANOMAYA

Come back to your sky. Visualize the sky above you. And see that the sky is open. Here and there it's dotted with a few wispy clouds. Watch the open sky.

30 seconds

And now the sky is heavy. It's thick and dense with rain clouds. See the sky growing heavy.

30 seconds

And the clouds part again. The sky is open and blue.

30 seconds

Now clouds roll in. The sky becomes heavy and moody.

30 seconds

Can you be all of these things, with no preference for one over the other?

Open and blue; intense and cloudy. How does it feel to hold all of these things in one sky, one body?

(7) CHIDĀKASH

Picture yourself walking now, walking barefooted toward an open meadow. This place is sparsely populated, so there is nothing to see in the distance other than open air. As you tread more deeply into this field, you feel the blades of grass becoming taller brushing first your ankles, then knees, even touching your hips in some areas. The earth beneath your feet feels supple and alive with dew. You trudge a bit further and find a clearing. You take a seat and then lie down. The view above is that of a clear night sky. It's so clear, even the stars have yet to come out. Settle into your resting place and close your eyes.

Notice that behind your eyelids, you can see the same blue-black sky that existed when your eyes were open. This internal sky is just as vast and open as the one you are lying under. This is the field for you to know. This is the mindspace or the chidākash. Keep watching, allowing your eyes to adjust. Step into the role of the witness. Can you watch this space without any expectations? Be present and be patient. Perhaps something appears...like shapes or colours or patterns. Perhaps something un-seeable arises, like emotions, sensations or memories. Perhaps nothing appears. Watch whatever rises in the same way you would observe a painting or a landscape or the open sky. Watch with abiding curiosity and a generous serving of kindness. Simply watch.

4 mins

wind chimes
spring breeze
warm summer night
eagle feather
orange clouds drifting at sunset
canada geese flying north
pillow feathers
horse running

bubbles floating
kite flying
bird song
rustling leaves
sheets on the line
windmill churning

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

Lean into this sense of knowingness. Knowing that you are just like the sky. You are perfect capacity for whatever is moving through you. Knowing that whatever experiences you have held up to this point are just that, experiences. You are ever-free. You are the sky.

And from this place, please repeat your intention. Repeat this three times silently to yourself.

(9) RETURN

Taking time with the return journey. Go slow. First, allow your sense of hearing to wake up. Let your ears wrap around the sound of my voice. Let your ears reach out for sounds from beyond this room. Start to listen.

Awaken the sense of touch. Notice how the air that surrounds you feels as it hits your skin. Notice how it feels as you breathe it in and out.

Just because the eyes are closed doesn't mean the seeing stops. Visualize the four walls, the ceiling and the floor of this space. And see where you are within it. See your body, lying on the floor, supported by props. Can you see yourself? And watch as the breath starts to deepen. Taking deeper breaths that move the ribcage and belly.

And you've been still for some time, so make your first few movements small ones. Swallow a few times. Nod the skull left to right. Slide the eyebrows up and down. Part the jaw and lips. Graze the edges of your fingers with your thumb. Wake up the toes. Ankles. Wrists. Until eventually, you may stretch your arms overhead and take a lengthening inhale, and an exhale to release it all.

vayu mudra: Thumb rests on second knuckle of index finger, tip of index finger resting on base pad of thumb

SPACE ELEMENT SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVING

Stillness affords us perspective. From your vantage point, resting here, on the floor, can you take in the space around you, can you notice the presence or absence of space in the room you're in? Can you imagine how space manifests in your body? The space between breaths, the space between muscles and joints, the space that your body takes up. Can you imagine how space manifests in your life? In the pause before reacting, in the silence between words, in the breaks between busyness. Space is therapeutic. Space is for us to occupy.

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'pleasant, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?
45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

It is the presence of space that encourages us to fill it. To fill it with the choices we make, the emotions that move through us, the connections we seek. It is the application of space that heals.

Space is where creativity lives. In the ether we can find our voice. Our place to express and speak with authenticity.

For your intention today, can you shout it into the void:

I express myself with clear intent.

Creativity flows in and through me.

30 to 45 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

As my words pull your awareness to different locations, perhaps your efforts can be to see the space between them. The space within them.

Start first by feeling the hollow of the....

mouth
tongue
throat
nose
nostrils
nasal passages
sinuses in the cheeks
outer ears
ear canals
inner ears
eyes
eye sockets
brain cavity
hollow where the spine
and the skull meet

base of the throat
chest cavity
lungs
belly
pelvic bowl
shoulder joints
palms
elbows
armpits
shoulder blades
lower back
whole torso X3
hip joints
back of the knees
knee joints
ankles
arches of the feet

Unite all of the hollows together into one awareness, one feeling. Allow this blanket feeling to unfold completely. You are one spacious body, resting on the face of this earth, floating through a vast universe. You are you, in the vast expanse of the akash.

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

Samana vayu

Now imagine your breath had the capacity to create more space internally, because it can. See breath enter the lungs and expand the ribcage. See your breath move the body like an accordion. Expanding with the inhale, and turning inwards with the exhale. Can you watch this 360 degrees of breath? Feel and become aware of the space of your breath from the front of the ribs, sides of the ribs and back of the torso.

1 to 2 min

(6) MANOMAYA

Come back to observing the whole body. You are observing with an abundance of kindness and an abiding curiosity.

Awaken the feeling of spaciousness- however this manifests for you. You are spacious. You extend beyond the boundary of your skin. You extend beyond your mat, beyond this room. Embody space.

30 seconds

And now, explore its opposite. You are contained. You reside in the centre of your being. You nestle within the boundaries of your blanket, clothing and skin. You are contained.

30 seconds

Once again, you are spacious. Your consciousness presses past the four walls of this room. You are huge. You are expanding. You are sky-bound.

30 seconds

And now you are contained. You are back into the centre core of yourself. Back in this room, boundaried, earth-bound.

30 seconds

Pulse between the two. Evoke spaciousness... and now containment... expansiveness... and groundedness.....feel open and pulsating like a sheet drying on the line... and now feel boundaried and contained, as though that sheet has been folded into a neat square. Can you capture the feeling of being both spacious and contained at the same time? What does it feel like to be both expansive and grounded? Feel both in the same body.

1 min

(7) CHIDĀKASH

You are one body, resting on the earth. Zoom out and gain some perspective: see that above you is a canopy of trees. In between the branches of the trees you can see an open sky. A sky with its clouds, planes, birds and stars. Zoom out further now, starting to see the atmosphere of this planet. Keep moving outwards, beyond the planet Earth and into space. See the planet Earth below you, see the moon in its orbit, see the shining ball of energy that is the sun. Behold all that is before you... and watch.

Can you continue to watch? Keep it simple and just watch. If you feel the tug of a story or memory, remind yourself: I'm just here to watch.

star filled sky
new moon
chanting ohm
endless blue sky
horizon on the landscape
the milky way
prairie meadow
crickets humming
sound of silence

(8) SANKALPA PLANT

The application of space in our lives is that everything is change. A strong emotion or experience is just that—a strong experience or emotion that we feel, and release. With practice, we can work toward seeing the space between these touchstones. After all, we're just here to watch.

As you lean into the space you've created (perhaps through body, breath or between your thoughts), can you call forward your intention? Repeat it three times more.

30 seconds

(9) RETURN

Climb your way back to planet Earth. See yourself and your awareness enter back into this room and back into this body. Go slow, and start to breathe a little more deliberately, perhaps more deeply. If it's fitting, let an exhale or two fall out of the mouth. Start to allow the rest of the physical body to return with gentle movement...

akash mudra: Tip of middle finger and thumb connect

THE FIVE ELEMENTS SCRIPT

(1) ARRIVE

Feel the earth of your body.... That which is dense and formed. That part of you that takes up space and responds to gravity. Feel all the earthly parts of you as the weight of your muscles, organs and bones settle into the floor.

Feel the water of your body... That which is fluid and moving. The wave-like flow of your breath. The passage of blood through your veins. The subtle pulse of your cells. Examine all of those parts of you that take on the qualities of water—quietly moving, rushing, streaming through your system.

Feel the fire of your body... your sense of self...your willpower...your vision. Feel the fire-like nature of your mind as it holds and creates thoughts at the speed of light.

Feel the air of your body.... The sense of breath moving in and out of you. The spacious wind of your thoughts as they move through your line of vision, like clouds moving through the sky on a windy day. Take note of your emotional landscape, that which is present for you right now. And hold this, feel these, like you would feel a breeze moving across your face.

And last, feel the space of your body. Knowing that in between all of your earth parts, water parts, fire parts and air parts, that there is space permeating you. That there is space between each breath. Space between each thought. Space between each of my words.

And as you take all of these elements into account: earth, water, fire, air and space—know that you are a most unique concoction of all of these ingredients. You are one perfect recipe, alchemy, mosaic of all of these things. You are perfect.

(2) HOME BASE

Let's start first with our imagination. Please call to mind a place where you feel most at home, most comfortable to be yourself. It could be any place. It may be indoors or outdoors. It may be a place you know well, or a place you have yet to visit. There is no wrong answer here. Whatever place that comes to mind when you hear words like 'familiarity, comfort, ease' is the right place for you.

And now that you're here, use all of your senses to make this place come alive with detail. Notice what there is to see. If there is a sound to be heard in this place, can you hear it? Is there a texture to feel, or a quality to the air in this place? Is there an aroma or scent to this place? Smell it. And last, is there a flavour to this place? Maybe you are snacking on your favourite dish. If there is a flavour, can you taste it?
45 seconds to 1 min

From here on out, you can refer to this place as your home base. This place is always here for you. If at any point during this practice you feel lost or uncomfortable, please return here. And please also know that I am holding this room and keeping time. You can allow yourself to feel cared for. You can allow yourself to feel cared for.

(3) SANKALPA DIG

fire

Connect to some inner resolve, some intent. Can you use your vision to set the tone for your practice? What brings you here? Can you speak your desires into being? State an intention today as if it were real.

I am here to _____.
30 seconds

(4) BODY SCAN

As you move your awareness to different parts of the body, let your awareness land on the elements of you like sunshine.

Bring sunshine to earth in your feet (r/l).....heels (r/l).....calves (r/l).....shins.....knees.....thighs.....

Cast sunlight on the water in your pelvis.....hips.....pelvic floor.....buttocks (r/l).....low belly south of the navel

Bring the sunlight of your awareness to the fire in your abdomen.....right side waist....left side waist.....navel centre.....bottom rung of the rib cage.....solar plexus, right at the base of your sternum bone

Sunlight comes to the air in your rib cage.....bring sunlight to the space between each rib.....right side lung.....left side lung.....sternum bone.....back of the ribs.....right shoulder blade.....left shoulder blade.....collar bones.....base of the throat.....right shoulder.....elbow.....wrist.....hands.....base of the throat.....left shoulder.....elbow.....wrist.....hands.....base of throat

Shine a light in the space of the throat.....vocal chords.....trachea (wind tunnel).....esophagus (where you ingest your nutrients)

And last, bring awareness to the mouth.....tongue.....insides of the cheeks.....teeth.....gums.....nose.....nostrils.....cheek bones.....eyes.....feel the weight of the eyelids.....right temple.....left temple.....right ear.....left ear.....space between the eye brows

(5) NOTICING PRĀNA

water

Connect to your water self. Feel the wave-like pulse of your breath. Air rushes in like a wave, and pushes out, back to the sea.

Where does this wave touch you? At the level of the belly, swaying up and down.

30-45 sec

At the pulse of your diaphragm, bobbing up and down like a jelly fish underwater.

30-45 sec

In the ribcage, where the breath expands the volume of your lung centre.

30-45 sec

(6) MANOMAYA and (7) CHIDĀKASH

air & space

Land yourself around the faculty of your senses. This is where air and space live. Know that in this moment, each of your powerful senses are directed inwardly, they are receiving the experience of this practice. They are recording your internal landscape.

Start with your sense of smell. Notice now if smelling is happening. And it may not be. Simply check in with this sense and notice: is smelling happening?

30 sec

Land your awareness in your mouth. Notice where the tongue is settling. Is there a sap, a residue—is there something to taste? Is tasting happening?

30 sec

Your sense of touch is governed by your skin. It's a global sense. Remind yourself to direct it inwards. Internally, is there sensation here? How does the body feel? Is a sense of touch happening?

30 sec

Your sense of hearing is working both ways, as you receive my voice and my words, but also, as you acutely listen for what is coming up from the inside. I'll give you some silence. Is hearing happening? What is there to hear?

30 sec

Last, land on your sense of vision. Be specific about it. Land your awareness right behind the eyelids. Let your eyes see what's happening behind the eyelids. Can this space be as open as the night sky? A sky that's filled with air and space. Spend some time observing. Whatever comes up—thoughts, sensations, memories, visions—these can all take on the qualities of air. We only notice air when it moves, when it becomes wind. We only notice thoughts, when they move. Watch, and let them move. Let them move in and out of your line of vision. Simply watch.

2 to 4mins

Send that space awareness down to your fiery resolve once more. Awareness lands at your belly. Speak your intention here once more. I am here to

30 sec

(9) RETURN

Let's return from the ethereal space of our thoughts, wishes and desires and begin the journey back to what is formed and manifest for us. Take a few breaths... pulling in more air to wake up the system. Let the fire mechanism of your brain and senses switch back on. Thoughts might move more quickly now. Senses can help you become acutely aware of the room you're in. Start to nod and rock the body like you're in a swimming pool on a floaty. Let the movement be rhythmic and gentle like a lazy river. Last... feel the body move and wake up. Feel earth within you and below you.

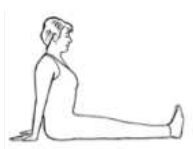
JOINT MOBILIZATION SEQUENCE

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Pavanmuktasana - Mukunda Stiles ♥ 2002



1. Stick pose - Dandasana



in
EXHALE feet toward head,
toes spread



1 INHALE point foot

curling the toes



2. INHALE soles face

out keep feet upright.



EXHALE soles face

keep feet upright.



3. INHALE circling out
EXHALE circling in



4. INHALE with a mild arm
effort, straighten knee



EXHALE hold lower shin
as you pull heel to thigh



5. INHALE turn leg out
little toe down & swing open



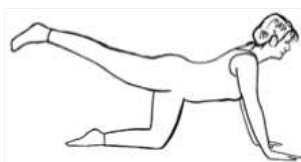
EXHALE lift hip, turn leg in
great toe down & swing it back



6. INHALE head up
spine down



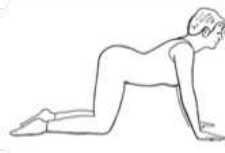
EXHALE back up
abdomen pulled in



7. INHALE stretch leg
back and up, spine down
forward



EXHALE bring knee
toward chest, spine lifted



8. INHALE center pose
squeeze thighs



EXHALE hips to side
feet opposite, toes

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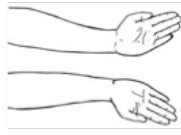
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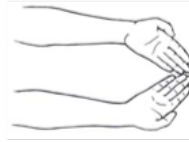
9. INHALE hands out
down fingers curled toward forearms



EXHALE hands up fingers toward head & spread



10. INHALE palms flat & out



EXHALE palms flat & in



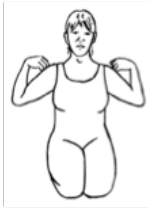
11. INHALE fists
EXHALE in 3x then reverse circles



12. INHALE arms straight, palms up



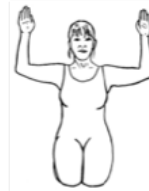
EXHALE knuckles to shoulders



13. INHALE elbows wide apart



EXHALE elbows together



14. INHALE hands up palms facing forward



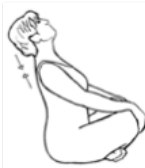
EXHALE hands down, palms face backward



15. INHALE arms up with palms facing in



EXHALE arms behind your back



16. INHALE arch back, squeeze blades



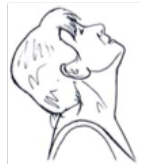
EXHALE round back open shoulder blades



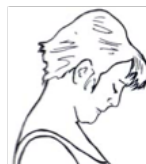
17. INHALE erect
EXHALE side bend



18. INHALE sit erect
EXHALE spinal twist



19. INHALE head up



EXHALE head down



20. INHALE sit erect
EXHALE head to side



21. INHALE center head
EXHALE rotate head

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BLOG

The following is an email dialogue with a student after they experienced yoga nidrā for the first time at my workshop. After some editing and finessing, what you read below is a 'prettied up' version of our exchange. We agreed to share it in the hopes of demystifying the practice of yoga nidrā. For clarities' sake, the voice of the student will be italicized. (Thank you so much to the kind student who got this ball rolling. I am grateful to have met you!) Here goes....

1) NIDRĀ VS. MEDITATION:

My understanding of meditation is that we take on the role of the witness, we simply observe what comes up. Is this the same with yoga nidrā? Yoga nidrā is a guided meditation, but what makes it different from a seated meditation practice?

The common thread is that in both meditation and yoga nidrā the work of observing is detached, or radically non-interfering (observing without engaging in emotions or judgement.) The role is just to WITNESS and nothing more. Meditation is more active or we could say: the onus is on you to catch when the mind wanders and redirect it back to the task at hand. In nidrā, the witnessing is passive, fluid and open-ended. There may be moments where you feel actively engaged as the witness, and moments where 'you' and the entire story fall away.

2) SANKALPA:

Before our practice, we created an individual intention that was positive and in the present tense, called a sankalpa. Sankalpas, as you mentioned, can be specific and short-term, or they can be lifelong and all encompassing. Here comes a basic question, please:

If I am working on a lifelong sankalpa, say, "I am serving my life's purpose," how often should that sankalpa be my intention during nidrā? Out of respect for such a mammoth intention, should I work with the same sankalpa until I believe it's achieved, or is it possible to interrupt it with setting smaller, less frequent sankalpas? In short, how married are you to your sankalpa?

I love your mind. :)

In asking these questions, I think you know the answers. If sankalpa discovery is the product of deep listening which, in turn, fosters more deep listening, you will be in tune with the ebb and flow of your sankalpa, just as you are in tune with the ebb and flow of your life's journey. Perhaps that's way too esoteric!

Take two: I have a somewhat broad sankalpa ('I am free') that moulds and resets as needed. Perhaps it means that I am free to hear and respond to the need for a different sankalpa when my life's circumstances call for it. If your sankalpa is 'I am serving my life's purpose' there may come a time when the need for specifics will manifest itself. For example, say this sankalpa leads you towards knowing you need

a career change. The springboard 'baby' sankalpa may become: I seek and find the career for me.

I think you are married to your sankalpa as long as it serves you and fits where you are at. It's not a definite answer, but you will know when the sankalpa should shift, when it's become so engrained within the fibres of your being, that another one emerges.

3) THE NIDRĀ EXPERIENCE:

The first time I practiced yoga nidrā it was delightful! The second and third times have been a little less delightful and a little more challenging. Is there something I should be aware of about the practice, its nature and progression? I know I will have clearer sight of this the more I practice, but I am very, very intrigued by this right now.

What a great observation! My first responses:

The experience of nidrā may be like the first time one practices yoga or meditation and has a REALLY GOOD experience. It's something totally new; our brains love learning new things, so there is a wealth of satisfaction to it. You are not the first student to tell me the second and third times were 'worse' or perhaps even 'harder.' This is a perfect representation of our tendency toward attachment, or our longing for things that are pleasurable (in Sanskrit: raag) and our aversion from things that are uncomfortable (dvesh.)

I think the hardest instruction to follow in nidrā is to come with no expectations. If it truly becomes a practice (sadhana), you are doing it because this is what you do, not for the fruits of the action. (WHAT A HARD LESSON TO EMBODY!) So... I sit daily in meditation not because it will make me feel great, but because that's just what I do. I try to hold no expectation for the experience of meditation. And-- 98% of the time, my meditation is just, well, mundane. Maybe 2% of the time there's a glimmer of pure bliss, joy or whatever I'm seeking. If you can translate this idea around expectations and attachment to nidrā, you may begin to notice the same things.

4) THE NIDRĀ PURPOSE:

What is nidrā's purpose? What makes nidrā, nidrā?

Wowzers...it's a real age old question. First, a little nidrā history:

- o Interestingly, nidrā is more of a newer practice in the scheme of yoga's origins. It was created by Swami Satyananda Saraswati with the specific intention of sharing it with the West.
- o However, there are many parts of the nidrā practice that are firmly nested in the ancient yoga practices:
 - the body scan section is based on the Tantric tradition
 - the witnessing aspect is 100% based on the yogic practice of meditation
 - the format for the practice that speaks to the layers of the self is based on the kosha model, first introduced in the Taittiriya Upanishad (The Upanishads represent some of the oldest literature on yoga, the foundational texts for how yoga became a

practice and lifestyle. They are beautiful stories presented as dialogues between teacher and student.)

- the first uttering of the word 'nidrā' and a discussion of the stages of sleep (and consciousness) are introduced in another Upanishad called the Mandukya Upanishad

- and I would argue the whole practice is an act of non-dualism. During nidrā, when we dance between opposite sensations like hot and cold, we are undoing the pattern of opposites, of seeing ourselves as separate from others. This is non-dualism! (And is a topic very deserving of another blog.)

Nidrā is a practice that wraps up all of the above goodies and packages it in a lovely, restful experience for the practitioner.

I think the purpose of yoga nidrā is in the heart of those who practice it. I'll speak from my experience: sometimes its purpose is to just let my body rest, let my parasympathetic nervous system activate, maybe even catch a few zzzzzzs. Sometimes, it's to help me heal from past trauma and work through emotions. Sometimes, it's to help me make a big decision or find answers buried deep within myself. And I could go on and on.

If we are looking for a more objective answer: offering nidrā in workshops and classes is certainly a means for: introducing meditation, providing nervous system respite, allowing the body to rest, and the beginnings of training one to listen better to their body. The uniqueness of nidrā is in the ability to interact with deeper layers of our consciousness in a way that's inaccessible in the waking state. It's not sleeping...it's not dreaming...but it kind of is both. I haven't come across anything else quite like it!

If you have made it this far through this annoyingly scrutinizing e-mail (and blog), then this is the time to extend my (our) final words of gratitude.

May you bring goodness wherever you go.

May goodness find you wherever you are.



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RECOMMENDED READING

On the chakra system:

Wheels of Life by Anodea Judith

Eastern Body, Western Mind by Anodea Judith

On Western and Eastern anatomy:

Yoga of the Subtle Body: a guide to the physical and energetic anatomy of yoga.
by Tias Little

The Anatomy of Movement by Blandine Calais-Germain

On meditation:

A Path with Heart by Jack Kornfield

*anything from Jeff Warren

On starting a yoga practice:

Bringing Yoga to Life by Donna Farhi

On yoga philosophy:

One without a Second by Hali Schwartz

On yoga nidrā:

Yoga Nidrā: The Art of Transformational Sleep by Kamini Desai, Ph.D.

Yoga Nidrā: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing by
Richard Miller, Ph.D.

Yoga Nidrā by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

A transcription of a speech by Swami Satyananda Saraswati can be accessed here:
<http://www.yogamag.net/archives/2005/emay05/yn.shtml>

sheilacullen.com – my yoga nidrā teacher, see her offerings here.

On the history of yoga nidrā:

Yoga Nidrā: An understanding of the history and context. A blog published on
January 6, 2015 by Jason Birch and Jacqueline Hargreaves on the Luminescent
Blogspot. Accessed: <http://theluminescent.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/yoganidra.html>

Salvation through Relaxation. An article by Mark Singleton published in the Journal
of Contemporary Religion (Vol. 20, No. 3, 2005)

On creating a sankalpa:

yogainternational.com/article/view/how-to-create-a-sankalpa

The Four Desires by Rod Stryker

Scientific studies of yoga nidrā:

Pictures of the Brain's Activity During Yoga Nidra. A study by Robert Nilsson.

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On neuroscience:

Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart by James R. Doty, M.D.

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel Van Der Kolk

Wired for Love by Stan Tatkin, PSYD.

On restorative yoga:

Relax and Renew by Judith Hanson Lasater

On sleep and consciousness:

The Head Trip by Jeff Warren

Liminal Dreaming by Jennifer Dumpert

An article on the hypnagogic and creativity is accessed here:

<https://www.livescience.com/little-known-sleep-stage-may-be-creative-sweet-spot>

Other goodies:

Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda

The Mirror of Yoga by Richard Freeman

Yoga for Transformation by Gary Kraftsow

The Restorative Yoga Deck co-designed by my teacher, Scott Davis, this deck of cards covers 26 yoga poses and sequences for specific indications.

Primary Source Texts:

- *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* – the text on the how's and why's of a Hatha yoga practice. I recommend the translation by Swami Muktibodhananda.
- *The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali* – broken into four chapters, this is the text that introduces the eight limbs of yoga. For a brief translation, I recommend the work of Brijendra (Robert William Eaton). For a lengthier translation, I recommend Swami Shyam. A free translation is available online by Chip Hartranft.
- *The Upanishads* – source material on non-dualism. I prefer the translations by Eknath Easwaran.
- *The Bhagavad Gita* – introduced and translated by Eknath Easwaran.
- *Yoga Vashisht* – translated by Swami Shyam