

Yoga Nidra—Sleep of the Yogis

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A couple of years ago, I was invited to a yoga class. Okay, I've got to admit it, even though it may mean you'll stop reading right here... I don't like yoga. I get dizzy doing the *downward-facing-dog* pose, and I can't chill in *child's pose*. I went to this yoga class because my friend told me there were no poses involved. Alright! My kind of yoga at last.

As I walked into the room the teacher told me to get as many mats, blankets and bolsters as I'd need to create my perfect resting spot. After I was snuggled into my nest, under a heavy blanket, a lavender scented eye pillow blocking all light, our teacher Susan began to speak, gently explaining that Yoga Nidra is a practice that allows the body to rest completely while putting the mind into a state of awareness.

The Integrative Restoration Institute defines *iRest Yoga Nidra* as, "a profoundly transformative practice that leads to lasting psychological change, as well as physical and emotional healing. It teaches you how to live a contented life, free of conflict, anxiety, fear and suffering by opening your mind and body to their inherent ground of health and wholeness."

Susan's voice is sonorous, filled with simple wisdom, confidence and calm. With a careful pattern of phrases, she leads you through a heightened awareness

of your body, your thoughts, beliefs and knowings. There is never a time where you need to do anything but just lay comfortably, listen and attempt to stay alert as the teacher guides you. I said "attempt" to stay alert as it is rare that I ever stay completely awake through an entire session. The good news is, even if your body drifts off to sleep, your mind is actively involved as, through the teacher's words, your mind explores, releases, repairs and rests. "Yoga Nidra is a superlative relaxation tool. **One hour of effective Yoga Nidra is equivalent to over four hours of sleep!** But, the true purpose of Yoga Nidra goes well beyond deep relaxation. Yoga Nidra establishes the link between the conscious desires, the will power, the subconscious and the unconscious mind. When this happens, you reap all-around powerful benefits and feel in total control of all aspects of your life." [From www.healthandyoga.com/HTML/news/nidra.html] My experience has always been to finish a class or CD feeling peaceful, rejuvenated and gently confident.

Many versions of Yoga Nidra have been developed over the years. Dr. Richard Miller developed a form called "Integrative Restoration" or "iRest" in an

effort to make the 3,000-year-old Eastern philosophies and instructions more accessible to Western minds. After many years

of practice, Dr. Miller brought Yoga Nidra to veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The patients had suffered emotional and physical wounds so debilitating as to require them to be admitted to Walter Reed. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a constant companion for these soldiers. Although acclaimed therapists and therapies were abundant, it was well noted that Dr. Miller's Yoga Nidra was enormously successful in an unusually high percentage of PTSD patients.

All people deal with emotional and physical stresses throughout their lives. Stress manifests in so many ways. At times life becomes a struggle to regain our well-being. Imagine the very real possibility of managing multiple and long-lived stresses by relaxing your body and allowing your mind to become active in healing. My own results with iRest mirror those of other participants who report that they:

- Sleep much better
- Experience decreases in insomnia
- Just feel happier
- Feel their depression, anxiety and fear are all reduced
- Feel greater comfort and ease in their body and mind
- Experience decreased

perceptions of chronic and acute pain

- Feel more connected in their interpersonal relationships
- Have improved interpersonal relations
- Feel more comfortable when encountering circumstances they cannot control
- Feel an increased calm and well-being
- Experience an increased sense of control in their lives
- Experience more control or mastery of their emotions during everyday events

There are now pain clinics, sleep clinics and even homeless shelters throughout the U.S. that require participation in Yoga Nidra classes because of the amazingly high success rate with participants being able to actively change their life's path through iRest.

Susan Blackwell Tate is the only trained iRest instructor in Montana and was trained by Dr. Miller himself. There's a link at the end of the article for finding other iRest teachers around the world.

You will never find subliminal suggestion or dogma as part of an iRest session. Space limitation does not allow me to walk you through an entire Yoga Nidra session. There is a helpful description of a typical session at www.TheHolisticCare.com/Yoga-nidra.htm.

Susan welcomes you to join



Susan Blackwell Tate and
Dr. Richard Miller

in a class that runs typically from 6 to 7 p.m. on Thursdays at the YogaMotion studio at Bozeman's Emerson Cultural Center. She has graciously offered a drop-in price of \$10 to those who mention this article. I would suggest contacting her directly for her schedule of classes. ■

Visit irest.us. Contact Susan Blackwell Tate at 581-9056 or e-mail irestmt@bresnan.net.

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