



relaxation for all the family

by Indra Singh

'Total harmonious relaxation cures the body. To achieve this, there must be a co-ordination between the three facets of ourselves: body, mind and spirit'.....Yogi Bhajan

Quite often it is thought that when we relax we need to divert the mind with distracting activities such as the television and computer games. These activities only act as added stimulation to what is already active inside the body and mind.

To experience true relaxation, it is important to stay consciously aware. This can be achieved through the practice of Yoga nidra or deep relaxation.

Yoga is to unite and Nidra is to sleep.

Yoga Nidra and relaxation are achieved by the ability to look inwards and not to be distracted by outside influences, although to do this there is no need for concentration. It is not about allowing yourself to fall asleep but about being on the edge of sleep and wakefulness. In this way, it is possible to feel complete mental, physical and emotional relaxation.

The world is changing and lifestyles are not the same as they used to be. Children are being brought up in a world so full of technology

and constant stimulation that it is no wonder they have difficulty finding peace.

There has been a large increase in conditions such as asthma, migraine diabetes and digestive disorders over the past 10 years. There are no real medical answers to these problems because their main source lies rooted in the change of lifestyle. The need for more money and materialistic desires all add to the upheaval in our natural rhythms.

Whether you're a tense person or not, it is very rare to live life totally 'tension free'. Somewhere in the body tension accumulates. It may be physical, mental or emotional.

Yoga deals with the individual as a whole, 'the union' of all the body systems. If there is tension in one part of the body, this will usually effect another area and we can be caught in a vicious circle. When we practise Yoga Nidra or deep relaxation, this effects the body on every level and is very rejuvenating. Thirty minutes of Yoga Nidra practice is said to be equivalent to 2 hours of deep sleep.

During this time of relaxation not only does the body relax but, with regular practice, the whole personality can be transformed, old habits discarded and new, more positive tendencies introduced.

Photos: Keith Hartwell

starting young

There is no better time to start this practice than when you are a child. Once a child is introduced to these techniques, they will have the ability of being able to deal with the stress and strain of modern life and the pressures it can bring. All that is required is the capacity to listen and be able follow instructions. Timings can be reduced depending on the age of the child and the length of their attention span

the practice

Lying in *Savasana*, cover the body to keep warm. Let the legs be straight and the feet naturally relaxed sideways. This helps to open the hips. Rest the arms straight by the sides with the palms facing upwards. This will relax the shoulders and open the heart. Take a deep breath in and raise the head off the mat drawing the chin into the chest, lengthening the back of the neck. Place the head back on the mat and feel the spine straight and long.

During the practice do your best to stay awake, remaining fully aware throughout.

Begin to feel a sense of relaxation throughout the whole body from the tips of the toes all the way up to the crown of the head. Every time you exhale, let go just a little bit more. Surrender yourself to the earth. Trust that the earth will take all your body weight and every time you feel yourself relaxing, know that it is a chance to give yourself permission to relax a bit more.

Let go.....feel yourself sinking further and further and further
(1 minutes silence)

"Yoga deals with the individual as a whole, 'the union' of all the body systems".

At this point we will make a 'resolve,' a short positive statement that is personal to you. Discover this statement naturally without any effort or too much thought and repeat it 3 times to yourself with total awareness.

(This may be as simple as 'I am happy')

(pause)

Now let the resolve disappear like a puff of smoke knowing that it will come true as it is part of a deep Yoga nidra practice

awareness

We will now become aware of each part of our body and, as each part is named, silently suggest that it relaxes.

Start by taking your awareness to your toes. Relax your 2 big toes and then slowly work along until you reach your little toes...relax.

(pause)

Relax the tops of the feet, the soles of the feet and the heels.....relax the whole foot.

(pause)

Let your awareness move up into the ankles. Relax each tiny bone in the ankle joints....relax the ankles.

(pause)

Relax the whole of the lower leg, the knees and the large muscles in the thigh.....relax the whole leg.

(pause)

Start to take your attention upwards, relaxing the buttocks and the whole of the pelvis. Feel any tension you have releasing down into

the earth. Let it go.

Relax the lower back, middle back and the upper back....let go, let go, let go.

Release all tension and troubles and any anxieties....relax
(pause for 30 seconds)

Relax your abdomen, your rib cage and the upper chest, letting go of any tension in the shoulders, upper arms, elbows, forearms, wrists, tops of the hands, palms of the hands. Relax each thumb and finger individually.

(take 1 minute pause)

Let us now relax the neck and the throat. Soften the facial muscles all the way up to the top of the head.

Take pleasure in this feeling, knowing that you don't have to do anything or be anywhere. All you have to do is listen, relax and let go.

(take 1 minute pause)

As you become aware of the relaxation in every part of the body, begin to feel that every part of the body is melting, from the toes all the way up to the crown of the head.

As you feel this warm sensation, on an out-breath release all tensions and worries to mother earth and, as you inhale, fill your body full of positive light. Breathe the light deep down into the core of your being. This light can be any colour you choose.

Exhaling: releasing the negative.

Inhaling: filling the whole of your being with positivity.

As the breath grows deeper, relax a little bit more. Inhaling, expanding the light, let it grow brighter and allow this light to expand beyond your physical body on the mat and take it into the space around you until you are totally submerged in a beautiful glowing light.

Surrender into the light

You are peace love and light

Be who you are

Let go of all resistance

(take 1 minute pause)

Slowly begin to bring yourself back and become aware of your resolve that you made at the beginning of the practice. Repeat it 3 times with 3 long, slow, deep breaths.

When you have finished, say to yourself 3 times.

'I am relaxed and free from tension'

Become aware of your 5 senses. Keep your eyes closed. First of all become aware of your sense of hearing, listening to sounds in the room and outside the room.

(take 30 seconds pause)

Be aware of the taste in your mouth and, as you deepen the breath, become aware of your sense of smell.

Gently move the fingers and the toes. Circle the hands and the feet to work the wrists and the ankle joints, becoming aware of your sense of touch.

When you are ready, inhale and stretch your arms above your head, flexing your feet and still keeping your eyes closed.

Bring the palms of the hands together and the soles of the feet together. Rub the palms as fast as you can. Place the warm palms over the closed eyes and take 3 long, slow, deep breaths. Open the eyes within the cupped hands and feel the energy flow into them. Open the fingers and slowly take the hands away from the face to let in the light.

When you are ready, place your hands behind your knees and rock forwards and backwards on the mat. Come into *Easy Pose*, legs crossed and hands placed in prayer position in front of the heart centre.

Sat Nam.....truth is my identity.

For details of Indra's classes, see page 47