

# Yoga Spirit Academy E-zine

Healing body, mind and spirit  
with the wisdom of Yoga, meditation and Ayurveda

November / December 2018

Volume 11, Issue 6

## Yoga Nidra Meditation

By Janet W. Parachin, PhD

This is part six of a six-part series on Meditation. So far we have covered sitting meditation, walking meditation, chanting, chakra meditation, and mindfulness meditation. Earlier articles can be found at <http://yogaspirittulsa.com/Newsletters>.

I love to point out that juxtaposing Yoga and Nidra is a play on words that ought to make us smile: to practice Yoga means to be awake in this present state while Nidra literally means "sleep." Is it possible to be awake and asleep at the same time?! One way to describe it is to say that our body is placed in the position of sleep but the mind remains awake and aware in the state of meditation. A common position for yoga nidra is Savasana, the corpse pose, or any other restorative pose that feels comfortable for the duration. It's also possible to practice sitting up leaning against the wall with ankles crossed and hands folded in the lap. The hope is that we can find the right position for the body so that we *don't* immediately fall asleep.



In studying yoga nidra we need to understand that the practice is not the same as sleep, even though the word actually means "sleep." We think of sleep as the relaxing of the body and the mind and changing the brain waves for that short time in the night that we designate as sleep. In the ancient understanding of nidra, it is distinct from the physiological act of sleep and is understood primarily as the absence of thought. Modern science is now confirming, however, that during our natural sleep cycles we do enter a time of non-thought. We can see this in the brain waves too.

The human brain operates at different states of consciousness and attention. The levels are differentiated by the frequency of the brain waves, as seen on an EEG (Electroencephalography).

They are named using letters of the Greek alphabet. (*Hz = Frequency, one cycle per second*)

**Beta** – 14Hz and higher. Alert, active state of mind. Associated with thinking and being awake.

**Alpha** – 8 to 14Hz. Relaxed state of mind. Associated with daydreaming, general relaxation.

**Theta** – 4 to 8Hz. Deeper relaxed state. Light stages of sleep. Hypnosis. Meditation.

**Delta** – below 4Hz. Deep sleep. No conscious awareness.

Sleep cycles are believed to have four stages. During the first two stages, Theta waves are present because the body and mind are transitioning into sleep. The third stage is deep sleep, the only stage when Delta waves occur. The fourth stage is the famous REM (for Rapid Eye Movements) stage which indicates dreaming. It's fascinating to note that the Beta and Alpha waves which are associated with the awake state become active during the REM stage too. There is no difference between being awake and asleep as far as these brain waves are concerned! During REM, however, the physical body becomes quite still and the ability to move muscles is compromised.

It takes about 90 minutes for us to cycle through these stages, and then we cycle back and forth between stages two and four throughout the night. While Western minds still discuss the purpose of sleep, the Vedic tradition has long held that sleep is a form of "digestion" for the mind, meaning that the mind sorts through the information and experiences of the day to integrate what is useful and dismiss what is not.

*Continues on next page*

Yoga Spirit Academy  
200-hour and 300-hour yoga teacher training  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
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[www.yogaspirittulsa.com](http://www.yogaspirittulsa.com)

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## Yoga and Ayurveda Diet and Lifestyle course begins in January

This course covers diet and lifestyle choices according to the doshas and the seasons, the six tastes of food, cooking for the doshas, basic herbalism to balance the doshas, and understanding the effect of the environment, times of the day and seasons of one's life on overall health. The cost of this 45-hour course is \$675.

**January 26-27, 2019**

**February 23-24**

**March 30-31**

**April 20 (make-up and review)**

For more information visit our website

<http://yogaspiritulsa.com/Training-Workshops/Advanced-Training>

## Yoga Nidra *continued*

In the Vedas four states are described: Waking, Dreaming, Deep Sleep and Enlightenment. Yoga Nidra is called Deep Sleep, and it can also be vehicle to Enlightenment. How cool is that?!

Back to modern science: Meditation is associated with Alpha and Theta brain waves, but yoga nidra is associated with Delta brain waves. This is why a yoga nidra session can be as refreshing as a deep, sound sleep.

The best way to experience Yoga Nidra is with an experienced teacher since this guided meditation is very difficult to recite to yourself. I have taught it now for so many years that I have memorized a sequence that I can recite to myself, but I still need an app to ring the bell at the end.

Look for a live yoga nidra class in your area or try one of these options:

Insight Timer app has lots of free yoga nidra classes

Richard Miller's book *Yoga Nidra: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing* comes with two complete practices on a CD

The website of Swami Jnaneshvara contains information and practices <http://swamij.com/yoga-nidra.htm>

## Advanced Yoga and Ayurveda Students

Welcome to new and continuing students in our 300-hour Ayurvedic Yoga Teacher (AYT) training. This fall we're studying Constitutional Analysis as we learn to recognize the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), how the constitutions manifest in individual people, and how to read it through the pulse, tongue, face, lip, nail and eyes. Please seek us out for a reading since we're always looking for willing subjects with whom to practice our new skills.



From left to right: Michelle Munson, Amanda Sloan, Kandice Mallinger, Alyssa Worth, Beth Goodwin, Jennifer Rorex, Janet Parachin, Shelby Wasson, Amanda Kuhns

### CALENDAR

November 3-4 Yoga Teacher training weekend

November 17-18 Yoga and Ayurveda Constitutional Analysis

December 8-9 Yoga Teacher training weekend

*2019 training dates are now on the website*

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