



## *Yoga Nidra*

### “Introduction to iRest® Meditation”

Richard Miller, PhD

**RICHARD MILLER:** Yoga nidra is an ancient meditation practice that supports psychological, physical, and spiritual health, resiliency, and well-being. The term *yoga nidra* is composed of two words from Sanskrit. Yoga, which means the view, the path, and the means by which you experience your non-separate, interconnected wholeness with yourself and all of life. And the word nidra, which means sleep, but it actually represents a changing state of consciousness-- such as waking, sleeping, dreaming-- but also includes sensations, emotions, and thoughts.

So the word yoga nidra means to know yourself as this non-separate, interconnected wholeness with all of life, no matter the changing state of consciousness that's present. Yoga nidra is made up of a sequence of practices that help you feel connected to yourself, with others around you, and with the world around you. These meditation practices teach you how to respond rather than react to your emotions, your thoughts, no matter your state of mind or body.

When we react, we feel that something remains incomplete in the way that we handled a particular situation. Something continues to feel off and not right within ourselves. But when we respond, we feel in harmony with our actions and with the world around our self. I first became involved with yoga nidra in 1970 when I moved to San Francisco and decided to meet people by taking a 12-week yoga class at the Integral Yoga Institute.

When I showed up for my first class, I found out that the director had decided to teach the class in silence. So during the 12 weeks of my course, I didn't meet a single person. But I ended up meeting myself, which became a major turning point in my life. At the end of the first class, the

instructor taught us a rudimentary yoga nigra meditation where we were invited to alternate our attention through pairs of opposites, through different sensations and emotions in our body.

That night, I walked home feeling expansively present, totally at ease, and radiantly joyful within myself. I felt myself connected both to myself and everything around me, at one with the universe, experiencing myself and life as being perfect just as it is. I felt myself as a spacious, non-localized presence at one with the universe. It felt to me that instead of having my usual experience of feeling separate and alone, I was having an experience of being at peace, connected and one both with myself and the universe.

This experience left a deep longing in me to understand the practice of yoga nidra and to realize for myself this ongoing sense of peace and connectedness. In the following decades, my yearning would lead me to study with some of the most renowned meditation teachers in the world and become my own skilled practitioner, both in my own practice and in sharing the practice with others. In 2003, I was invited to consult on a research project at the Deployment Health Clinical Center at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital. They were interested in the effect that yoga nidra might have on helping wounded service members heal from their experience of PTSD, post-traumatic disorder, and their wartime experiences.

Yoga nidra was an unfamiliar term in military circles. So I was asked to come up with a new name for this 4,500-year-old approach to meditation. After pondering for some time, I came up with the name Integrative Restoration, or iRest for short. "Integrative" because I feel that yoga nigra helps us to become a fully functioning and psychologically integrated human being. And "restorative" because I feel that the practice helps us recover our inherent joy, peace, resiliency, and well-being so that we feel totally connected to ourself and to all of life.

And back in those days, everything was iPod or iPhone, so I decided to call it iRest-- "I" because it helps our sense of ego or our sense of separation relax and be at ease and "rest" in terms of restoration. It restores us to our sense of oneness with the universe. The military became delighted with this name, as it had a worldly ring for a Western-based research study on post-traumatic stress. And the study became so successful that iRest was integrated immediately into

the Deployment Health Clinical Center, where military officials and the soldiers who are taking the practice became very comfortable with the protocol.

They had a great respect for this ancient tradition and its ability to help heal soldiers and wounded warriors through their wartime experiences. To date, there have been over 20 research studies conducted with iRest in all manners of subjects, from post-traumatic stress to anxiety to a sense of well-being with all sorts of populations, from military to children and college students to people who are experiencing homelessness and to people in general who just are interested in learning meditation to help bring peace and well-being into their life.

I call the various practices that make up the iRest program *tools for life*. They comprise a tool belt of essential practices that can help you experience true health, resiliency, and well-being throughout your life within all your relationships under all the circumstances you'll face during your lifetime. These tools empower you to skillfully meet each moment of your life with unshakable peace and well-being no matter how challenging or difficult your situation is. We can't know what an apple tastes like unless we taste it. You can't know the power of iRest Yoga Nidra unless you practice it.

Regular practice a little and often enables you to experience the power of iRest for achieving optimal resiliency and well-being and experiencing your wholeness with life. These recordings are designed to help you make iRest your ever-present companion this day and for the rest of your life. So while you're listening to these recordings, do remind yourself to practice a little and often, day by day, every day, perhaps for the rest of your life.



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