

Restoring Sleep and Mental Health after Brain Injury with Yoga Nidra

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Learning Objectives

- **Describe** yoga nidra & benefits for brain injury
- **Discuss** best practices for adapting yoga nidra for brain injury
- **Experience** a full practice



Mental Health & Sleep

48% receive psychiatric diagnosis after TBI

- Anxiety: 36% people with TBI (18% general pop)
- Depression: 43% people with TBI (3–6% general pop)
- TBI/PTSD can co-occur, though not always
 - 3–27% people with TBI have PTSD

30–85% of people with TBI sleep disturbance: insomnia, fatigue, difficulty maintaining sleep

- Poor sleep quality undermines recovery
- Mental health (and other) symptoms exacerbated by sleep dysfunction

Yoga Nidra

Evidence-based guided meditation technique shown to improve sleep, PTS(D), headaches, and anxiety after brain injury

“Yogic sleep” or conscious sleep

- Hypnagogic State: awareness between waking & sleeping

Yoga Nidra vs. Mindfulness Meditation

- Practice of dis-identifying with negative thoughts/emotions

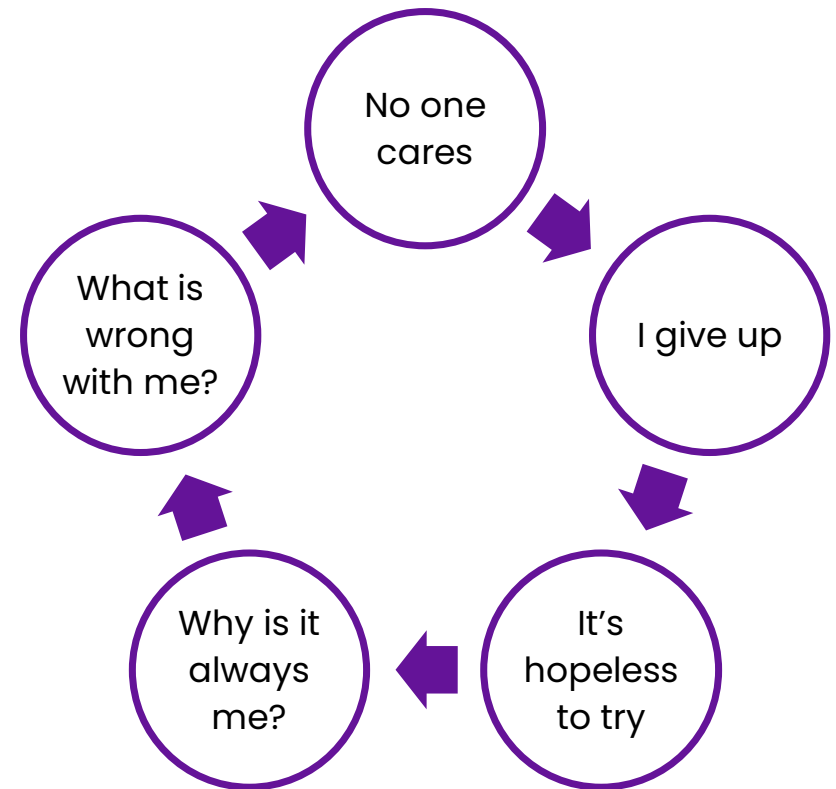
Highly accessible > laying down, wheelchair

Yoga Nidra Protocol



Benefits of Yoga Nidra for Brain Injury

- Interrupts negative, ruminating thought patterns
- Neuroplasticity – Every time we have an experience, a groove (samskara) is cut out. Each time we return to this groove, it strengthens the corresponding neural pathways of the brain, enforcing that groove.



Intention: planting new seeds



Benefits of Yoga Nidra

- **Decreases anxiety and stress**

Releases Gaba, Melatonin, Serotonin

Releases muscular tension (PRM) which interrupts states of anxiety

- **Relieves symptoms of depression**

Reduces cortisol

Releases serotonin, Dopamine, DHEA, melatonin

Builds interoceptive awareness which reduces depressive symptoms

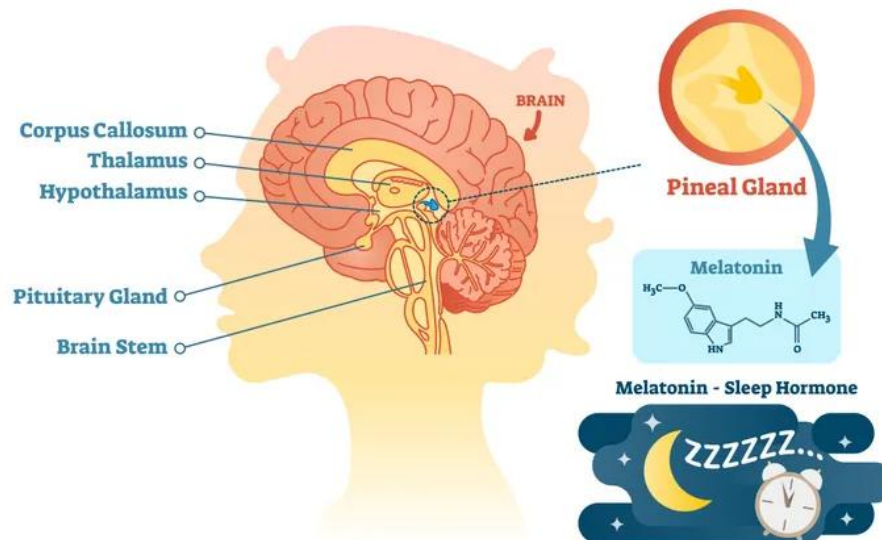
Benefits of Yoga Nidra

- Enhances sleep quality

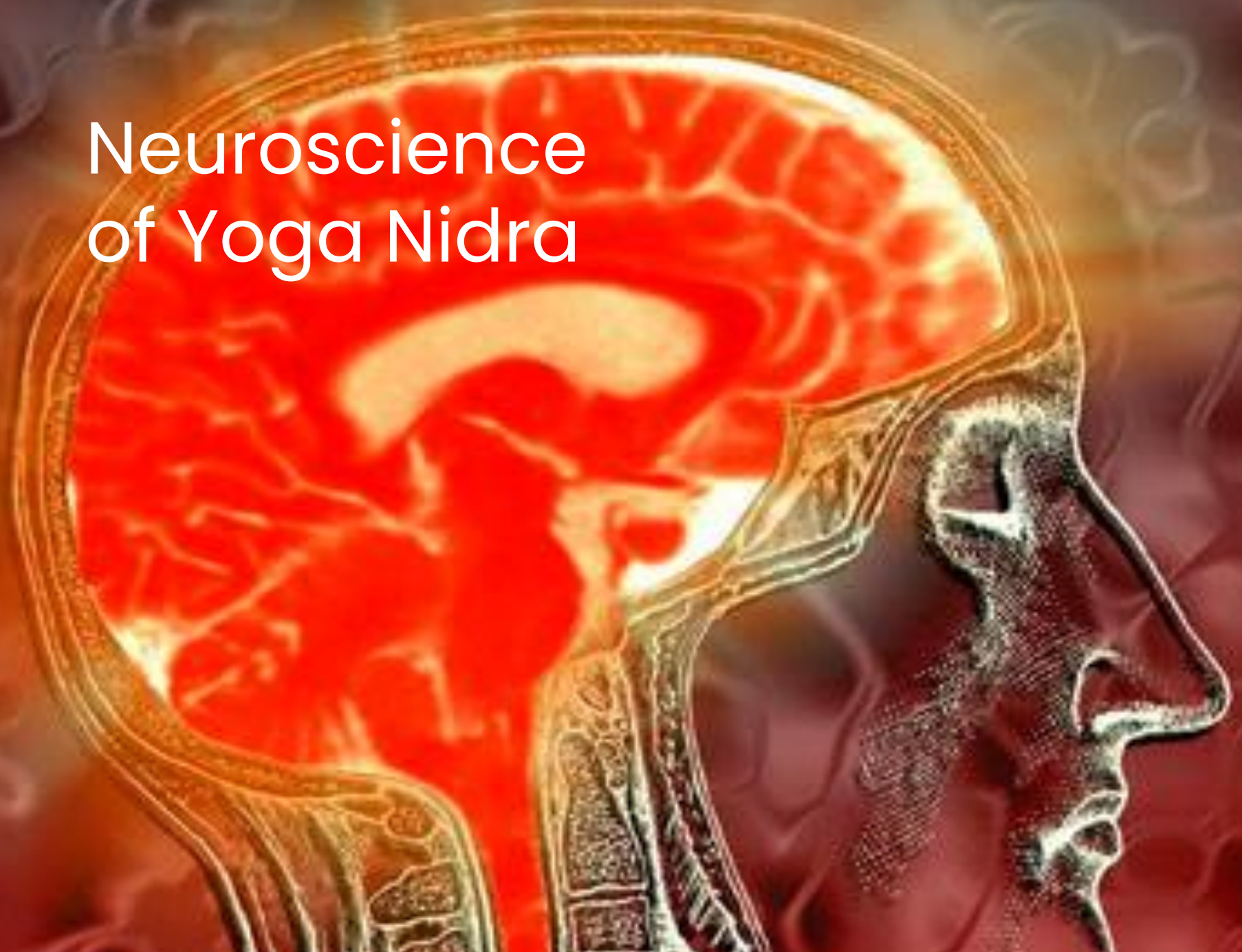
Helps re-set circadian rhythm

Releases melatonin via pineal gland simulation

By enhancing melatonin release, fall asleep faster and experience more restful sleep

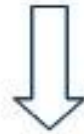
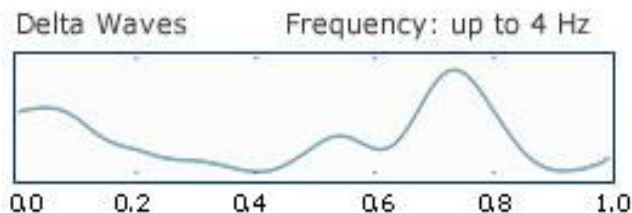
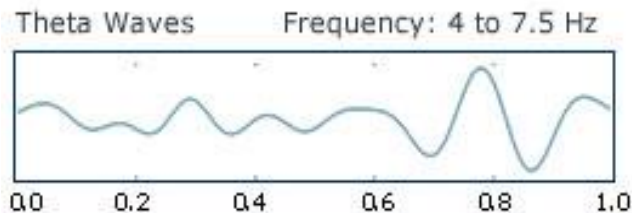
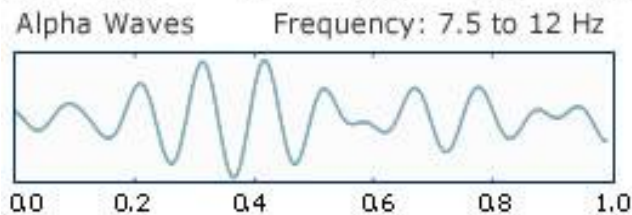
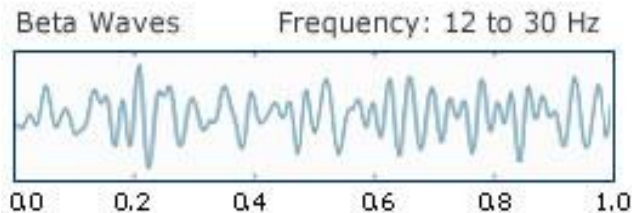


Neuroscience of Yoga Nidra



Brainwave states

EEG Brain Frequency Chart



Conscious Mind

Normal waking state of consciousness. Alertness, concentration, focus, cognition and the five physical senses.

depth of mind

Gateway to the Subconscious Mind

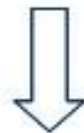
Deep relaxation and light meditation usually with eyes closed. Relaxation, visualization, creativity & super learning.

Subconscious Mind

Usually light sleep, including REM dream state. Deep meditation, intuition, memory and vivid visual imagery.

Unconscious Mind / Collective Consciousness

Usually deep sleep. Dreamless state. Automatic self-healing, immune system function. Collective Consciousness

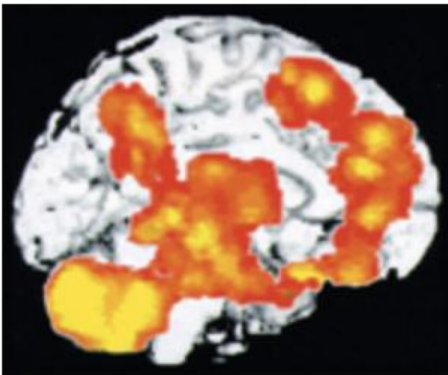


What's happening in the brain?



Study shows significant changes

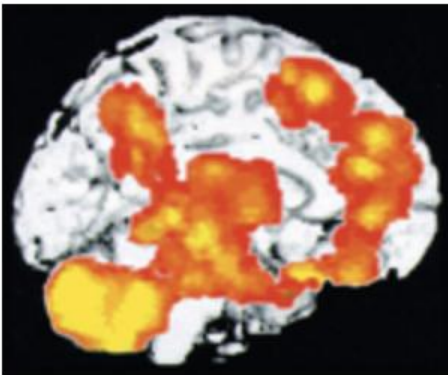
Normal Waking
Consciousness



Frontal lobe: problem solving social behavior
Brain Stem / Cerebellum: Sensory Perception
Limbic system: Emotions, instincts

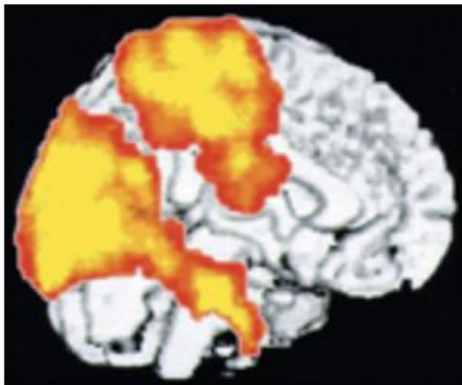
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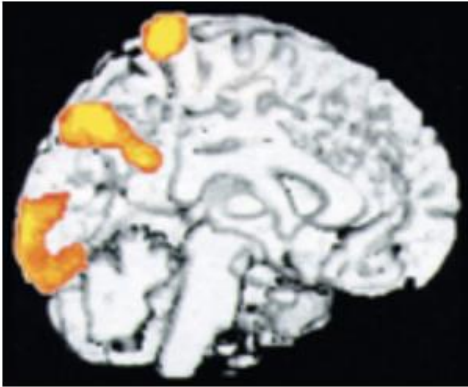
During Yoga Nidra



Occipital lobe: visual center
Parietal lobe: tactile sense
Limbic system: Emotions, instincts

Study shows significant changes

Visualizations &
Body Rotations

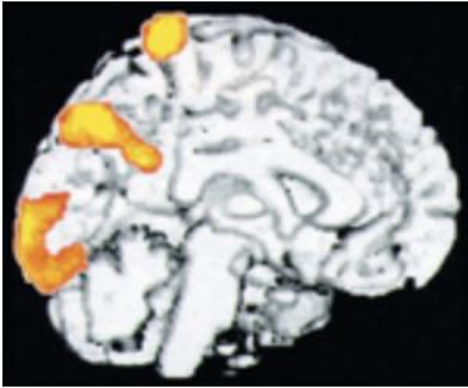


Occipital and Parietal lobes: Vision / Tactile

Activated when attention was directed through the body (especially the face) and also when individuals experienced a pleasant summer day in the country.

Study shows significant changes

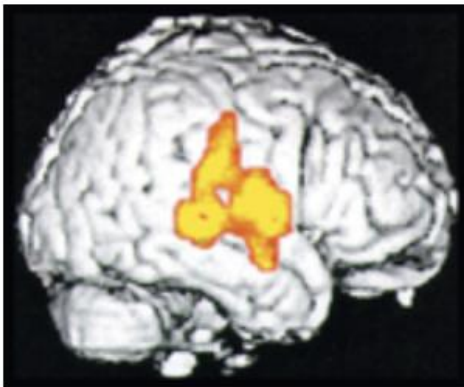
Visualizations &
Body Rotations



Occipital and Parietal lobes: Vision / Tactile

Activated when attention was directed through the body (especially the face) and also when individuals experienced a pleasant summer day in the country.

Resting in Awareness/
Abstract Experiences



Temporal lobe: Hearing & Memory

Activated during feeling of happiness, and at the end of the relaxation during the experience of identity, of being centered.

Best practices for brain injury

COMFORT: “I often would fall asleep while listening. I have a hard time doing yoga nidra on my back and not in my bed, so doing it for the first time in my bed was a game changer!”

TIP: Yoga Nidra can be practiced anywhere, in any position. In bed, on the couch or wheelchair. Normalize setting up in a way that’s most supportive and accessible.



TIP: Normalize feeling ‘no sensation’ and that it’s okay to shift positions if feeling discomfort/chronic pain.

Best practices for brain injury

TIMING : “Yoga nidra is amazing – it’s been such a great tool and having such a positive impact to creating calmness. I enjoy doing yoga nidra when I get home from work. It doesn’t work for me at night.”

TIP : Yoga nidra can be practiced any time of day. Some people prefer to use it at night to sleep. Others benefit from a mid-day practice, especially to support cognitive fatigue.



TIP : For attention regulation, can shorten practice to 15 mins.

“Now, go within, into a state which you may compare to a state of waking sleep, in which you are aware of yourself, but not of the world. In that state you will know, without the least trace of doubt, that at the root of your being you are free and happy.”

– Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Yoga nidra resources

- **LoveYourBrain** FREE
Meditation Library offers
voaa nidra practices for
awareness, connection,
resilience, and rest after
brain injury
- **iRest** offers voaa nidra
practices specifically
for PTSD
- **Insiaht Timer** – FREE
guided meditations



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