



# Proper exercise & Proper rest

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# PROPER EXERCISE

There is not only one way to exercise the body, or only one proper way, yet there are ways to harm the body and ways to nourish it. For instance, engaging in high impact and extremely demanding physical activities for long periods of time (years), while at first could make the body strong, it will end up harming the body in the long run. Different ancient traditions understood this and addressed it by studying and understanding how the body works, but beyond that, the understanding of the body was part of something bigger, of something greater, and therefore needed to be treated as a part of the whole and not as a separate entity. Proper exercise should not only focus on toning the body but also in bringing balance and overall health to all parts of the body, from muscles to internal organs, and ultimately lead to a tranquil space of mind.

It is important to mention that the spine is the major focus of the yogic exercises.



# PROPER EXERCISE

The intention of this statement is to not discredit traditional forms of exercise, rather the intention is to show there is a fundamental difference between the two. Traditional forms of exercise are a good way to stimulate the body and for most cases, if done mindfully, can complement the yogic practices.



# Characteristics of Proper Exercise

- Supports the spine, making it flex in all possible directions
- Supports the muscles, joints and ligaments, making them strong and flexible
- Aligns the skeletal system
- Supports the cardiovascular, endocrine, digestive and nervous systems



Ultimately and even though there are proper ways to exercise, any exercise is better than no exercise. So be active and stay active.

# Proper Rest

## **Rest, Sleep & Relaxation**

In ancient traditions, like yoga and many others, rest is a fundamental part of the holistic approach to health and balance.

We could define *rest* as the cessation of physical activity, yet there is more to it. For example, you could be asleep for several hours yet not get proper rest. Because of this, when we talk about *rest*, we don't only talk about sleep, we also have to talk about relaxation. They are related and support each other however they are not the same.

So we could say that rest happens as the result of a precious event or action. Sleep is a biological process that could or not end up in restfulness, and relaxation is related to performing a specific action (mental or physical) to induce the relaxed state.



# Proper Rest Includes

- Being able to fall asleep fast (within 30 min or less)
- Not waking up several time during the night
- Being able to fall back asleep within 20 min if waking up in the middle of the night
- Waking up energized
- Not feeling tired before noon
- An overall feeling or readiness and relaxation throughout the day
- Mental clarity



The main form of rest is sleep, yet as mentioned before, sleeping does not mean resting. Resting happens when the body is allowed to go through the natural cycles that allow recovery and reconfiguration. When we sleep, in particular, the brain is required to go through cycles that allow it to not only recover but also to regenerate and many other things like organize, store and consolidate information. None of that is possible if we are not resting while we sleep.

# Relaxation

## **Mindful Rest**

Relaxation supports rest but it happens consciously and intentionally. If there is tension or stress, there won't be relaxation unless there is a conscious command given. So we could say that for rest to happen, we first have to relax.

It today's world, stress is one of the biggest causes of health issues. Stress is tension or pressure. Stress is mental and emotional, but the most important thing to understand is that stress is not a bad thing (cold shower example). Stress is useful and necessary. It is the stress that is created by excessive thoughts that is a problem. Bad or excessive stress is created by the mind and not by circumstances.

So to be able to relax, we must not only include relaxing activities in our lives, but also learn to manage our mind and thoughts.



# Relaxation Techniques

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Breathing exercises
- Mindful visualization
- Word repetition, praying, mantras
- Savasana
- Spending time in nature
- And most of the practices we have been talking about in previous classes, like Service, detachment, contentment, moderation and so on

# Yoga Nidra

## **The King of All Practices**

Some people includes yoga nidra in the list of relaxation techniques, but it is much more than that. Yoga nidra will be more effective if the practitioner is already familiar with the skill of relaxation but it is not absolutely required as Yoga nidra on it's own will at some point provide relaxation in the first stages. Once relaxation is achieved and mastered, the real benefits of yoga nidra will begin to show and the practice of yoga nidra becomes a garage of creation, where anything is possible.

During yoga nidra, the 4th state of consciousness (liberation) is reached. It is there where we enter a non-dual pervasive substratum of changing consciousness states.



# Practice

- Get familiar with how your breath changes during your daily activities and take notes
- Develop a physical routine that suits your current life and needs
- Practice mindful diaphragmatic breathing at least once a day
- Include a body relaxation practice in your daily routine
- For a week, go to bed and wake up at the same time based on your ideal time

