

YOGA NIDRA, GUIDED VISUALISATION AND RELAXATION TAPES/CDS

By Cazzaw

I have found guided relaxation and visualisation techniques invaluable for my ME/CFS (also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome) as they help me in many ways including keeping calm and relaxed, reducing muscle pain and helping energy conservation. The effects are far more beneficial than spending the same amount of time sleeping and it is generally accepted that they can have a very positive effect on the central nervous system and help the immune system.

I have tried many relaxation tapes/CDS, but it took a while to find ones which I liked as some were unsuitable (e.g. voice too fast, or have loud music in the background, or a long introduction on why you need to relax with only a very short relaxation on it).

The tapes reviewed below are all ones which I myself or others I know with ME/CFS have found useful and a few were recommended by former The Yoga for Health Foundation. They can all be done lying down and, if necessary, they can be done sitting. There are no physical movements, so they should be suitable for most people with ME/CFS.

Most of the relaxations I have chosen are 25 – 45 mins long, but there are a few shorter ones mentioned too. There are also short relaxations on the Yoga for ME tapes/CDS (see separate review). All the relaxations can be done lying down on the floor or lying in bed, but a few can also be done sitting. I've included several tapes/CDS with no music in the background as some people with ME are noise sensitive and cannot tolerate the music and others just don't like it. These can be very hard to find as most relaxation tapes/CDS available have music or sound in the background. In a resources survey carried out by my local Yoga for ME/CFS group, only 10 out of 57 members (less than 20%) preferred music in the background on relaxation tapes/CDS.

If a relaxation tape asks me to tense my muscles and then relax them I just visualise this, as sometimes tensing them makes my muscles worse but some people prefer the tensing/releasing technique. I often find that I get stronger effects after having played a tape or CD several times as it can sometimes take a while to get used to the voice and the content. Sometimes if my brain is working slowly I can find a voice too fast, but again, listening to the recording several times can help a lot - it is much easier to take in the information when familiar with it. If a voice is too fast, then sometimes I can manage to ignore parts of it while it is playing and just listen to the parts I wish to.

Yoga Nidra tapes/CDS

There are several yoga nidra tapes included in this review. Yoga nidra is a very deep form of relaxation and means 'yogic sleep', your body goes into a state of sleep but your mind remains awake (you should not fall asleep doing this). Yoga nidra was recommended to me by the Yoga Biomedical Trust and by The Yoga for Health Foundation when I was bedridden, but is suitable for all levels of ME/CFS. This technique gives me a much deeper relaxation than other types of relaxations and hence has an even greater beneficial effect. It is said that half an hour of yoga nidra is equivalent to two hours of conventional sleep. Yoga nidra is very popular amongst members of my local Yoga for ME/CFS group, regardless of their activity level. Although yoga nidra is OK for beginners it may be better to have a little experience of guided relaxations first. My yoga teacher suggests that anyone wishing to do yoga nidra for the first time, and who does not have the guidance of a teacher, start with a beginners yoga nidra recording and stay at this level for a few weeks before progressing onto anything more advanced. She says it can be done as often as one wants, but daily practice should produce efficient achievement

of the state of yoga nidra and its benefits. For more information on yoga nidra, an article entitled “Yoga Nidra for those with ME/CFS” by Rebecca Allen can be found on the information page of www.sheffieldyogaforme.org.uk.

“Yoga Nidra for Health and Energy” recorded by Rebecca Allen (Rambha), devised by Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati (22 + 34 min CD): this was recorded in conjunction with Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS. It contains a short introduction, followed by a short yoga nidra suitable for beginners or those wanting a shorter practice, followed by a yoga nidra with a visualisation for health, energy and balance. Both yoga nidras produce a very deep relaxation effect. The second yoga nidra was designed with people with ME/CFS in mind but is also suitable for people with other health conditions to support the healing process or healthy people wishing to boost their energy and inner strength. Rebecca is an experienced Satyananda yoga teacher who teaches therapeutic as well as general classes. She takes some classes for Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS. Her yoga teacher training research project was on yoga nidra in relation to healing. Rebecca has a very calming voice. No music in the background. Can be bought on-line or paid for by cheque (cheques payable to Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS). Cost £10.00 plus £1.50 p&p (send e-mail for worldwide p&p). 50% of the profits of sale go to Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS. Address: Yoga Nidra CD, Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS, 36 Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11 8YN. Tel: 0845 582 0112. E-mail: ordersyfme@yahoo.co.uk. Web: www.sheffieldyogaforme.org.uk.

“Volume 1 : Deep Relaxation and Yoga Nidra” recorded by Swami Pragyamurti, devised by Swami Satyananda Saraswati (14 + 14 + 26 min CD): this is suitable for complete beginners in yoga nidra, and is part of a series of 6 CDs. It contains 2 short deep relaxations (“Still Body and Steady Breath” and “The Body Breathing”), a yoga nidra (“Beach Walk and Hilltop Sunset”) and explains the sankalpa (resolution) which is used in yoga nidra. No music in background. This is a new recording and is not the same as the yoga nidra 1 audio tape that used to be available. The first relaxation can be downloaded for free from their website. Cost £10.00 + 15% p&p. Address: The Satyananda Yoga Centre, 70 Thurleigh Road, Balham, London, SW12 8UD, UK. Tel: 0208-673 4869. Web: www.syclondon.com. The Inner Bookshop also sell this (see below).

“Volume 2 : Yoga Nidra” recorded by Swami Pragyamurti, devised by Swami Satyananda Saraswati (27 + 27 min CD): this is suitable for those with a little experience of yoga nidra or Volume 1 of this series. It contains 2 different yoga nidras (“Physical Senses and Healing Light” and “Crystal Pool & Guru’s Gift”). This is a new recording and is not the same as the yoga nidra 2 audio tape that used to be available. No music in the background. Details as for Volume 1 above.

“Volume 3 : Yoga Nidra” recorded by Swami Pragyamurti, devised by Swami Satyananda Saraswati (27 + 39 min CD): this is only suitable for those with much more experience of yoga nidra or Volumes 1 and 2 of this series. It contains 2 different yoga nidras (“The Well, the Golden Egg and Streaming Light” and “An Extended Practice Developing Awareness of the Chakras”). No music in the background. This CD is similar to the yoga nidra 2 audio tape that used to be available. Details as for volume 1 above.

“Relaxation Tape 4: Yoga Nidra” by Diana Lampen (26 + 21 min tape/CD): side one is a yoga nidra in a fairly similar style to those mentioned above, while side two is a different type of yoga nidra called yoga nidra kriya which also gives a very deep relaxation. No music in the background. Diana is a yoga teacher and has a selection of other tapes/CDs, including Relaxation Tape 3 and Guided Meditations and some of these have music after, but not during, the relaxation. She has a soothing voice. Cost £6.50 for tape or £8.50 for CD incl p&p (add £1.00 for worldwide p&p). Address: Diana

Lampen, Diana's Tapes, 21 Heathfield Gardens, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 3YD, UK. E-mail: lampen@hopeproject.co.uk. Web: www.hopeproject.co.uk.

“Yoga Nidra” by Pam Mathieson (23 + 26 min CD): this contains two different yoga nidras. Pam Mathieson (formerly Horn) has a soothing voice and sometimes takes classes for Sheffield Yoga for ME/CFS. No music in background. Cost £10.00 + £1.00 p&p (contact Pam for overseas p&p). Address: Pam Mathieson, 207 Tom Lane, Sheffield, S10 3PH. E-mail: pam.mathieson@btinternet.com. Tel: 0114 2304111.

“Yoga Nidra 1 - “Light Particles”” by Inez Stein (32 min CD): this contains a 3 minute introduction and a 32 minute yoga nidra with a light particle visualisation. Inez Stein is a yoga therapist and Kripalu teacher in the USA. No music in background. Cost \$7.99 plus p&p (free p&p in USA) from web www.inthemoment.org. E-mail inez@inthemoment.org for shipping costs to the UK. This is sometimes available on Ebay and www.amazon.co.uk or www.amazon.com but the prices vary.

“Yoga Nidra – The Blissful Relaxation” by Kathryn Blackie (49 min CD): this contains a yoga nidra which is similar to one of those on the yoga nidra 1 audio tape originally recorded by Swami Pragyamurti that used to be available. However, it is a much longer recording as the voice is very slow with long pauses in the speech. Kathryn is a qualified yoga teacher. No music in the background. Cost £8.00 plus £2.50 p&p if bought on-line and £8.00 including p&p if paid for by cheque (cheques payable to Kathryn Blackie). Address: Sadhana Yoga Studio, Wilminstone Industrial Estate, Old Exeter Road, Tavistock, PL19 0FD. Tel: 01822 614874. E-mail: kathryn@doitwithyoga.co.uk. Web: www.doitwithyoga.co.uk.

“Progressive Relaxation, Nadi Shodan Breath and Yoga Nidra I” by Dr Serena Roney-Dougal (15 + 16+ 28 min tape/CD): this contains a yoga nidra which is similar to one of those on the yoga nidra 1 audio tape originally recorded by Swami Pragyamurti that used to be available. It also contains a pleasant relaxation and some alternative nostril breathing. No music in the background. Dr Serena Roney-Dougal also has another yoga nidra tape/CD entitled “Yoga Nidra II and Breath Meditation”. Cost £8.95 for CD and £4.50 for tape plus £1.00 p&p. Address: Growing Needs Bookshop, 11 Market Place, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9HH. Tel: 01458 833466. E-mail: GNbookshop@btinternet.com.

“Yoga Nidra” by Muz Murray (2 x 45 min tape/CD): side one is a different style of yoga nidra to those above and gives a deep relaxation. Side two is a guided visualisation. Sounds of a sitar in the background. Cost £7.50 for tape or £12.99 for CD plus £1.20 p&p (£1.60 for European p&p and £2.60 for worldwide p&p). Address: Inner Garden, 47 Baldwins Hill, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1SF. E-mail: igd.mantra-yoga.com. Web: www.mantra-yoga.com. The Inner Bookshop also sells this (see below).

Relaxation, guided visualisation and guided meditation tapes/CDs

“The Irish ME Trust RelaxationCD” by Dr. Bernard Stain (30 min CD): a guided relaxation/visualisation designed for people with ME by a qualified psychotherapist. This was recommended in “Perspectives”. Music in the background. Cost £5.00 incl p&p. Address: The Irish ME Trust, Abbey House, Abbey Street, Dublin 1, Ireland. Tel: 00353 (1) 401 3629. E-mail: imet@indigo.ie. Web: www.imet.ie.

“Perfect Relaxation” by Jan Sadler (3 + 3 + 6 + 13 + 12 + 12 + 12 min CD/MP3 download): contains an introduction and 7 short relaxations. No music in the background, except for one relaxation. Jan is founder of the Painsupport website and suffers from chronic pain herself. Jan also

has some other CDs, all with several short relaxations and visualisations with no music in the background, including “A Good Night’s Sleep”, “Relax and Release Your Pain” and “Pain Relief Without Drugs”. A sample can be heard on her website. Cost £10.00 plus £2.00 p&p (£4.00 for worldwide p&p). An MP3 download is available for £6.00. Can be bought on-line or by cheque (cheques payable to Jan Sadler). Address: Jan Sadler, c/o PainSupport, 1 Penoweth, Mylor Bridge, Falmouth, TR11 5NQ. E-mail: jansadler@painsupport.co.uk . Web: www.painsupport.co.uk .

“A Walk in the Country” by Marcia Murray (28 + 26 min tape/CD): A guided visualisation where you go for a walk in the countryside and then sit by a brook. The second side is the same as the first side except the ending is for when you want to sleep. A few faint nature sounds in the background. Marcia Murray is a qualified nurse and hypnotherapist and also has other relaxation tapes including the “Magic Carpet” where you fly off on a magic carpet to a place of your choosing. Cost £7.00 for tape and £10.00 for CD incl p&p. Address: Well Being, 27 Moorside Road, Honley, Holmfirth, HD9 6HR, W. Yorkshire, UK. Tel: 01484 662635. E-mail: marcia@wellbeing-relaxation.co.uk. Web: www.wellbeing-relaxation.co.uk.

“Rainbow Meditation” by Jean Credland (2 x 30 min tape): a pleasant guided meditation where you go to a stream with a waterfall and see a rainbow in the spray. Available in 2 different versions, one with and one without music in the background. Jean also has some other tapes including “Natural Healing” and “Gentle Relaxation”. Cost £7.99 + £2.00 p&p from the Inner Bookshop (see below).

“Learn to Relax (M.E. Edition)” by Alex Howard/Optimum Health Clinic (set of 4 CDs): This is a set of 4 CDs containing guided relaxations. Music or scientifically crafted tones in the background. They have also produced another series of CDs entitled “The New Sleep Inducer”. Cost is £29.99 plus £1.50 p&p (if paying by cheque make them payable to Alex Howard & Associates). Address: The Optimum Health Clinic, Bickerton House, 25-27 Bickerton Road, London, N19 5JT. Tel: 0845 226 1762. E-mail: admin@theoptimumhealthclinic.com. Web: www.theoptimumhealthclinic.com .

“Deep Relaxation” by Andrew Johnson (40 min CD/MP3 download): A deep relaxation tape by a clinical hypnotherapist and meridian therapist recommended by several people with ME. Music and sounds of the sea in the background. This recording is also available to download in MP3 format. Other MP3 downloads are also available including “Deep Sleep” and “Powerful Body Healing”. Cost for CD is £12.99 incl p&p and MP3 download is £8.49. Address: Andrew Johnson, The Kendon Centre, 27 Miller Road, Ayr, Ayrshire, KA7 1AX, Scotland. Tel: 0800 198 1097. E-mail: info@andrewjohnson.co.uk. Web for CD: www.deeprelaxation.co.uk . Web for MP3 downloads: www.andrewjohnson.co.uk .

“Inner Smile” by Merle McCarthy (2 x 40 min tape): side 1 is a deep relaxation and side 2 is a deep relaxation/guided visualisation where you send smiles through your body. Slow soothing voice with lots of pauses. This tape has now been rerecorded with music in the background. The earlier version with no music was very good when my brain was very bad. She also has a selection of other tapes, some with and some without music, including “Rainbow Relaxation” which contains 4 short 10-15 min relaxations on it with no music in the background and “Colour Relaxation” which has a 40 min deep relaxation and a 40 min yoga nidra using colour. Merle has also recorded a CD called “Inner Light”. Merle is considering recording some more CDs . Cost of tapes is £5.00 and CDs £7.00 + £0.70 p&p. Address: Merle McCarthy, 15 The Grange, Baroness Place, Penarth, CF64 3UW. Tel: 02920-711261. E-mail merlemccarthy@hotmail.com.

“Healing Meditations” by Bernie Siegel (4 x 30 min CD): four guided meditations for enhancing your immune system and finding the key to good health, using a combination of guided imagery and

auto-hypnosis. Music in the background. ISBN 1-56170-771-6. Cost £16.48 for 2 CDs + £2.00 p&p from the Inner Bookshop (see below).

“Inner Peace” by Angela Thompson (34 min CD): a deep relaxation by an experienced yoga teacher. Music in the background. Cost £8.95 for CD incl. p&p from Angela’s Yoga Books, End Cottage, Whitwell Street, Reepham, Norfolk, NR10 4RB. Tel: 01603-872030. E-mail: emma@angelas-yoga-books.co.uk. Web: www.angelas-yoga-books.co.uk.

“A Guided Meditation for Relaxation, Well Being and Healing” by Glen Harrold (29 + 31 min CD/MP3 download) : a guided meditation using hypnotherapy techniques. Side 1 is called “A Guided Meditation and side 2 “The Healing White Light”. Glen Harrold has produced many other CDs including “Complete Relaxation”, “Deep Sleep” and “Heal Your Body”. Music and hypnotic sounds in the background. Cost £11.95 for CD or £9.95 for tape plus £2.24 p&p (£3.10 for EU p&p and £3.54 worldwide p&p) or £10.95 for MP3 download. Address: Diviniti Publishing Ltd, Unit 1 Bourne Enterprise Centre, Wrotham Road, Borough Green, Kent, TN15 8DG. Tel: 01732 882 057. E-mail: sales@hypnosisaudio.com. Web: www.hypnosisaudio.com . May be cheaper on www.amazon.co.uk .

Mindfulness meditation CDs

Mindfulness, also known as awareness, is a state of present moment attention where one can clearly perceive thoughts, physical sensations, emotions and events at the moment they occur without reacting in an automatic or habitual way. For more information on mindfulness please refer to the book “Living Well with Pain and Illness: The mindful way to free yourself from suffering” by Vidyamala Burch, Piatkus, 2008 .

“Body Scan: Managing Pain, Illness and Stress with Guided Mindfulness Meditation by Vidyamala Burch and Sona Fricker (40 + 20 min CD, MP3 download): This CD contains a short introduction and a short piece of advice on posture and two scans through the whole body with awareness, using the breath to let go of areas of pain, tension and stress. Vidyamala Burch and Sona Fricker are both Breathworks practitioners. They have also produced other mindfulness CDs entitled “Mindfulness of Breathing: Managing Pain, Illness and Stress with Guided Mindfulness Meditation (Two-CD Set)” and “Kindly Awareness: Managing Pain, Illness and Stress with Guided Mindfulness Meditation (Two-CD Set)”. No music in the background. The cost of the CD is £10 + £2.00 p&p UK, £2.75 p&p Europe and £5.00 p&p worldwide. The other mindfulness CD sets cost £11.00 each and the cost of buying all 3 CD sets together is £29.00. MP3 downloads from the website are £7.89 each. Address: Breathworks CIC, 16-20 Tumer Street, Manchester M4 1DZ. Tel: 0161 834 1110. E-mail: info@breathworks.co.uk . Web: www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk

“Guided Mindfulness Meditation” by Mary O’Callaghan (38 + 30 min CD): Side one contains a Body Scan and side two contains a sitting meditation. No music in the background. Cost is 17 euros including p&p. It is possible to pay by UK pounds if pay by phone. Address: Oscailt Integrative Health Centre, 8 Pembroke Road, Dublin 4, Ireland. Tel: 00 353 1 660 3872. E-mail: info@oscailt.com. Web: www.oscailt.com .

“Still the Mind” by Bodhipaksa (2 CDs): A set of 2 CDs with simple breathing and mindfulness meditation exercises for inner peace. There are 2 short introductions and 14 tracks varying between 2 and 30 minutes. No music in the background. Bodhipaksa has also produced several other CDS with no music in the background including “Guided Meditations for Busy People” (9 short guided

meditations) and “Guided Meditations for Calmness, Awareness and Love” (3 guided meditations). Cost is from £9.47 (recommended retail price £18.99) on www.amazon.co.uk.

Subliminal CDs

“Relaxation” by Innertalk (CD): This is not a relaxation CD like the others, but is a mind training or subconscious learning CD. Various subliminal messages are spoken with either music or natural sounds in the background. You cannot actually hear the messages, but they are implanted into subconscious thought. This CD can be played while doing another activity such as reading, watching TV or doing yoga. There are many other similar Innertalk CDs, such as “Powerful Immune System”, “Sleep Soundly”, “Natural Pain Relief”, “Accelerated Health and Wellbeing”. When buying these CDs there is usually a choice of having natural sounds or music in the background. Cost is £22.99 + £2.95 p&p. Tel: 01628-898366. Web: www.innertalk.co.uk .

Other sources of guided visualisation and relaxation tapes/CDs:

Web site review: “Interaction” recommended an excellent review of relaxation tapes/CDs/MP3 downloads by Simon McGrath, web www.relaxationreviews.org. Many have music in background. It is possible to listen to samples. There are also some relaxations you can download, some for free.

Inner Bookshop: has a wide selection of relaxation tapes and also sells them secondhand, and these are listed on-line. Address: The Inner Bookshop, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ. Tel: 01865-245301. Web: www.innerbookshop.com.

Action for ME Library: has a good selection of relaxation tapes which members can borrow for £1.00 each. Tapes by Matthew Manning, Sean Milligan and William Collinge and “Imagery for Relaxation” by Dr Duncan Johnson are worth a try. Side 2 of the relaxation tape by Dr Robert Sharpe has an excellent very short deep relaxation. Address: Action for ME, PO Box 2778, Bristol, BS1 9DJ. Tel: 0845 123 2380. E-mail: admin@afme.org.uk. Web: www.afme.org.uk .

The Matthew Manning Centre: Matthew Manning has produced some excellent tapes in the past. Some are now unavailable to buy but can be borrowed from Action for ME Library. “Just Relax” is one of these and excellent for sending me to sleep. It has the sound of waves in background and no music. He has since recorded two CDs, one called “Deep Relaxation” and one called “Deep Healing” both with music in the background, which can be downloaded from his website. Tel: 01284-830222. Web: www.matthewmanning.com .

Amazon: Amazon have a wide selection of tapes at discount prices on-line but watch the postage costs. Web: www.amazon.com or www.amazon.co.uk .

Ebay: Ebay is also a good place to look for relaxation tapes. Web: www.ebay.co.uk .

Local Library: Your local library may stock some relaxation tapes/CDs.

The author has ME/CFS/borreliosis and uses yoga nidra, deep relaxation or guided visualisation tapes/CDs daily. Last updated March 2010.