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Yoga Nidra for PTSD and Mental Health

Dr. Miller and his organization have established iRest programs at various military sites, homeless shelters, prisons, hospices, universities, chemical dependency programs, mental health treatment centers, rehabilitation and treatment centers for multiple sclerosis, and cancer outpatient clinics. Yoga Nidra and its nuances are explained in this episode with Dr. Miller.

Full Transcript:

Sharib Khan : Hello everybody. This is a Cure Panel Talk Show and this is Sharib Khan, your host for the day. We are very excited to have our fifth talk on yoga and its effect on health and wellness. We have had leading researchers such as Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa of Harvard University, discussed the research being done in his lab using yoga as a therapy for different conditions and evaluating its benefit using clinical research study. We had David Emerson from the Justice Resource Institute talk about his experience of using yoga to treat patients with trauma. Then, we had Dr. Larry Payne who was talking about yoga for people in their 50s and beyond, and the last episode we actually had a discussion with Dr. Carol Horton and yoga for myeloma patients and how the practice of yoga can really help them with their cancer diagnosis and treatment. We are very excited to have our first show of 2014; and we have a very distinguished expert, Dr. Richard Miller, and four panelists will be joining us on an exciting discussion on the application of Yoga Nidra for posttraumatic stress disorder. Towards the end of the show, we will be addressing questions sent in by listeners and at any point our audience wants to ask a question towards the end, they can press 1 on their keypad and we will bring them online. So with that, let me jump on to introducing our experts for the day. Unfortunately, Priya Menon, our host for Cure Panel, she couldn't join us today because she is having internet and connectivity issues in India. She dials in from India, but I am stepping in for her; and I am very excited to introduce Dr. Miller who is a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology. He is an author, researcher, and yogic scholar and the Founding President of the Integrative Restoration Institute and the co-founder of the International Association of Yoga Therapists and the Founding Editor of the Professional Journal of IAYT, which is the International Association of Yoga Therapists. Dr. Miller has worked with Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the United States Department of Defense, studying the iRest, which is the short form of integrative restoration, the practice that utilizes Yoga Nidra techniques for restoration and deep relaxation. The iRest protocol was and is continuing to be used with soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, suffering from PTSD. Based on this work, Eric Schoomaker, Surgeon General of the United States Army, endorsed Yoga Nidra as a complementary alternative medical practice for chronic pain in 2010. iRest is currently supporting active duty personnel, veterans, and families of service members in over 30 VA or military settings across the United States. Dr. Miller and his organization have established iRest programs at various military sites, homeless shelters, prisons, hospices, universities, chemical dependency programs, mental health treatment centers, rehabilitation and treatment centers for multiple sclerosis, and cancer outpatient clinics. In addition, they have also brought this technique for preschool children and other yoga and meditation studios. iRest Yoga Nidra is one of the principal programs that are offered by his institution; and we are very excited that Dr. Miller will be joining us and discussing the specifics this program and in addition to Dr. Miller, we have four panelists, which we will be introducing one by one as we go through the show and we are very excited that they are joining us and we hope for a very fruitful discussion. With that, Dr. Miller, you are on air. Kindly introduce yourself. Welcome to the show.

Dr. Richard Miller : Absolutely. Thank you, Sharib. That was a very wonderful introduction. Thank you very much.

Sharib Khan : We are real excited to have you and I am personally, myself, been practicing yoga for almost a decade now and so I am really interested in hearing about Yoga Nidra. So, let me begin the show by

actually, we will start with a few questions and then I will bring on the panelists one by one and then we can further discuss the topic before throwing the talk to audiences. So, with that, let's just begin with you telling us a little bit about the details of Yoga Nidra, what it is, because we have all heard the word in our own yoga practices and in meditation practices, but exactly in your context what it means, how you define it, and then we can talk about how you are applying it as part of the iRest program.

Dr. Richard Miller : Of course, I'll be delighted to. From my perspective, the word "yoga" for me means our experiencing in our body, not just in our minds, as a physical experience or interconnectedness with the entire universe so that we feel our non-separateness from all of life, that we feel our each and unique expression of life and the approaches of yoga helps one feel very connected with our self, with others in our relationships, and with the world around us. "Nidra" is a particular word that actually means sleep in Sanskrit, but within the context of the Yoga Nidra, it means the changing stage of consciousness, so that could anything be from waking state, to dreams, to sleep, but it could also be a changing state like happiness, sadness, anger, or it could represent a changing state of circumstance like someone is in good health, then perhaps they are in poor health or they have cancer or posttraumatic stress or some other issue that they are facing in their life. So, when we put Yoga Nidra together as two terms, it actually means to feel that sense of connectedness with yourselves, with the world around you, no matter the circumstance that you are experiencing. So, yoga for me experientially and personally as well as the way I teach it helps us feel a sense of peace, an equanimity, a deep inner sense of well being, no matter the state of mind or body we may be experiencing and it's one of the reasons I feel its so successful with everything from anxiety, posttraumatic stress, to helping people sleep but also people who are wishing to develop a sense of well being in their life or in the ultimate sense of Yoga Nidra and yoga to awakening, to the sense of our non-separateness with all of life. It helps us feel a deep sense of integration and wholeness, no matter our circumstance or our situation that we are facing in life moment to moment. The practice of iRest as a formal Yoga Nidra developed when I first started experiencing Yoga Nidra back in 1970. I was given it in my first yoga class at the Integral Yoga Institute in San Francisco at the end of our first class. The teacher gave us a short form of what I now know as Yoga Nidra, and I had a most profound personal transformational experience where I felt this deep core sense of well being and a sense of connectedness. When I walked out that night after class I really felt myself as an expression of the universe, and I had a spontaneous vision and vow that came to me that night as I walked home, which is I wanted to spend my life understanding this process and this teaching of yoga and Yoga Nidra and so I began teaching it in my classes and I became a yoga teacher in 1973 and slowly developed it over years as a more secular form from the one that I had originally learned that had its roots in India where it came to us in the west with much of the cultural heritage in India. It is different, our type of imagery and visions and colors and so I started inviting people in the practice to really inquire into their own body and their own mind and feel what they were experiencing and slowly the practice developed for me as a very secular practice that I was able then to take out and bring to populations and homeless shelters in different centers as well as the yoga population. Then in 2004, we were invited to take part in a study at Walter Reed Army Medical Center with wounded warriors who were coming back from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and they actually asked us when we started the study to let go of the name Yoga Nidra because they didn't know what to do with the name and so they asked me to rename it and much to my surprise in contemplating what do I, how do I rename a 4,000 year old practice. I didn't feel that I should do that, but they wanted me to do it, so I came up with the name Integrative Restoration. Integrative because I think the practice of yoga and Yoga Nidra helps integrate us so that we become a whole healthy human being and restorative because it restores that sense of wholeness and connectedness both within our self and to the world around us and the army loved that name, very secular name, and I called it iRest because back in 2004 everything was iPad or iPhone and so I thought "I" for integrative and "Rest" for restoration, which the army loved and then after a couple years because we were so successful in our work with soldiers and veterans, they said that they said that they were happy for us to now call it Yoga Nidra. So, we keep the name integrative iRest Yoga Nidra mainly because we have done so much research today, 17+ studies showing the effectiveness of that and its a special, I would say, protocol of Yoga Nidra, so when people ask do we teach or does a clinic teach Yoga Nidra and they ask specifically for the iRest, we can tell them yes, we do. That's a little bit of the background.

Sharib Khan : You touched upon some really interesting points here and so I am going to step back a little bit and actually delve into the 1963 class you mentioned that when you were actually introduced to Yoga

Nidra, so just tell us a little bit about how did you actually get into the practice of yoga and then what was that transformative vision that you had, I mean in the actual literal sense, what kind of transformative experience it was in terms of feelings or emotions that evoked it. It would be very interesting if you shared a little bit about that.

Dr. Richard Miller : So, the class was in 1970. I had recently arrived in San Francisco from the East Coast. I had driven across the country, settled in San Francisco and I was wanting to meet people because I didn't know anybody in the city and somebody suggested that I take a yoga class or I saw fire, forgotten to me now, so many years ago, but I ended up taking, signing up for this 12 weeks' class, which actually is a funny story because they decided to teach the class in silence for the 12 weeks, so I came in to the building and entered the building and left the building for 12 weeks in silence and never really met anybody, but I was introduced to the practice of yoga and as I mentioned it had a most transformative effect on me in really what the transformation was. From that very first practice, the meditation that they were teaching us, the asana that they were teaching us, the breathing practice that they were teaching us helped connect me to myself in a way that I had never been connected to myself before in my life. Growing up on the East Coast, I was not necessarily invited to get to know myself and the practice of Yoga Nidra at the end was so deeply relaxing and restorative, I don't think I had ever felt that relaxed and at ease in my life and it gave me a sense of wholeness, of interconnectedness with the entire universe because I remember walking out that night, gazing up at the stars and I really had the feeling that I had no sense of separation from everything around me. I could feel an underlying essence of life, I call it, that lifts me and lifts the plants and the trees and the stars and the planets and I could really feel that underlying essence and during those 12 weeks, it kept reminding me and helping me experience that over and over again when I would leave the class. Over the subsequent days, it would kind of disappear, but then when I returned to the yoga class it would reinstate that and so it really fired my imagination because it was such an experiential, I would say its somatic, impact on my body and my mind and I have always been through college and afterwards when I came to San Francisco a student of Psychology and I began to sense how yoga itself and the discipline and Yoga Nidra as a particular application was helping me manage and welcome my emotions, helped me become friendly with my body, with my thoughts, so that I would feel like I was becoming an integrated human being, where I came to the practice I would say with a certain fragmentation from my background, circumstance, the isolation, or separateness, the practice of yoga really helped heal all of that and I would say it brought me back to being a fully functional human being.

Sharib Khan : That's very interesting. I mean so is the sense of integration that you feel, can it be, is it what the Sanskrit phrase "I am the universe, the universe is me," is it conveying the same sense or same sense of togetherness of the non-separation from rest of the universe?

Dr. Richard Miller : Exactly, so now over the decades of practice when I look at another person, when I look at a tree, when I look at any outside object, I see it in an outline form and I can sense how its separate from me, but there's another feeling tone that's there now which is of no separation. I feel the underlying force from which I would say we all come from and that accompanies me all day long, so, yeah, that sense of "I am that and that I am" is very much here with me moment to moment.

Sharib Khan : Okay. Okay. So going back to Yoga Nidra, can you explain like what the iRest technique is really and how it was applied in 2004 and 2005 with the soldiers and did you actually study the effects of a clinical research study with some scientific protocol behind it? Can you explain a little bit about that, of iRest?

Dr. Richard Miller : Yeah. I developed the approach from the classical Yoga Nidra that I learned first from Satyananda and then subsequently from the Bihar School of Satyananda's teachings, all that go back to the teachings of Shivananda from India, but I have also had a number of extraordinary teachers both from India and from the West who helped me develop the program. The way that I have formulated it is along the traditional lines, what they call the five koshas or the five bodies that we tend to identify with – our body, senses, mind, emotions, thoughts, but I have also added an additional kosha, what I call the asmitamaya or the body of I-ness and I will explain that, so basically the protocol is 10 steps. The first step, any journey we take in life begins with an intention, so when we start our practice of yoga or Yoga Nidra, I ask people what is their intention for practicing this and I also ask them what is their heartfelt, I call it heartfelt desire or mission

in life, in other words if we stop and really feel life is living us, that we are unique in each expression of life, that life is living us with a certain quality of purpose and meaning and value, can we get in touch with that and I sense the intentions are things that we do, vows that we take in life, how we eat, how we live, how we work, how we relate to other people. These kinds of intentions we have in our daily life, help us recognize this deeper heartfelt mission we might say of value and purpose. So, I start by helping people get in touch with that sense of life living them and their mission in life, the intentions that are helping them live into that heartfelt mission and then I help them find an inner resource within themselves that I call well being, some place within themselves where when they are in touch with it in their body, they have a sense of feeling secure, grounded, even safe because meditation, when we go deeply into meditation, it can invite the surface of our consciousness, deep emotions, deep thoughts, memories, that can be disturbing at times. When we get into the deeper aspects of meditation and encounter the deeper formlessness and emptiness that meditation reveals, it can cause unsettledness in the body and mind, so I want people to have a really good sense of well being that they can contact at an instant's notice. So those first three components, the intention of heartfelt mission and inner resource form what we call the sankalpa that we begin with. Sankalpa is a beautiful Sanskrit word that means "san" born from the heart and "kalpa" infers time, but it means something that unfolds over time, so these three as a sankalpa are bottom of processes. They are born from our heart and unfold over time as we grow into our intention and manifest our deepest desires in life. Once we have those kind of in place, then the next phase of Yoga Nidra, we engage a very systematic body scan, starting in the mouth, ending in the feet, which follows a very traditional yogic Shavayatra meditation, 61-point meditation, but I have come to see neurologically we are actually tracing the motor sensory cortex in the brain as we do a sweep of body sensing from our mouth to our toes and we do it very slowly, very systematically initially, later on we can go very fast, but we are trying to set up a biofeedback so that we can deeply relax in just a few seconds once we really have it in place and the body sensing gives way for the next form of protocol which is breath sensing, so we lead students or our self into different ways of working with the breath, sensing movement of energy in the body. I often give many different types of Pranayama, alternate side of the body breathing, breath noting, breath counting, abdominal breathing. So, we can weave into the practice all sorts of Pranayama so that depending on the person we can help them, depending on whether they need to relax, whether they have asthma, posttraumatic stress. I have done a lot of research in respiration, so I try to teach these and weave them into the practice. When we breathe deeply and systematically over time with the use of the diaphragm, it helps bring forward emotions into the body. So, the next component of Yoga Nidra is working and welcoming emotions and they are opposites so that we are becoming very comfortable with our emotions and I like to say that we are learning how to welcome all the different aspects of our body, mind, senses, and emotions and treating them as messengers, so when we have an emotion like sadness or grief or happiness or anger, I think of them as messengers that are giving us information for how we need to respond into the world so that the emphasis in the way that I teach Yoga Nidra is not on trying to change our emotions or get rid of them but really recognizing them, welcoming them, and in a way dialoguing with them to see what's the action that they are asking us to take into the world. So if we are experiencing, say, a momentary aspect of anger, by dialoguing with it we might feel a deeper sense where we might be feeling a sense of helplessness and then we are looking at the actions that by taking them help us feel more empowered. The anger has served a purpose, to help us find that action, it disappears and we are back into harmony with our self. As we are working with emotion, it's natural to begin to welcome the different thoughts and beliefs that are underlying our emotional life and so the next component of Yoga Nidra is welcoming and working with beliefs, core negative beliefs, positive beliefs, thoughts, memories, images that again as we welcome and learn how to be with them helps us restore our sense of integration with our self and we feel that we can manage and be with our thoughts in any way that they come to us. As we put in place body sensing, breathing, working with emotions, and welcoming thoughts, we feel that deeper sense of integration as a human being, it brings forward the next component of Yoga Nidra quite naturally, which is the sense of well being and joy. So, we spend time then during the practice inviting in joy, well being, our ability to feel and encounter pleasure in our bodies which many people who have had trauma or some form of posttraumatic stress often can't feel joy, so its really nourishing joy, welcoming it into the body. The last component of Yoga Nidra in the very classical form and the way that I offer it, we help experience our self as the witness of all of these changing circumstances of body, mind, senses, emotions, thoughts, and joy so that we can feel our self as the witness of them, where we feel connected to them but aware of them so that we can step back and really inquire into our self as a witnessing presence, ultimately a sense of awareness and come to understand that the sense of self, the sense of I-ness is like everything else a functioning that arises in response to the world and we are able in a

way to see that, step back from it, and in that moment of really feeling into the sense of being, witnessing awareness, it melts our sense of separation. We begin to feel not just connected to our self but to the entire universe; and in the depth of Yoga Nidra, we can contact this underlying essence we all are born out of. I call it the mystery for lack of a better word, but this that we all have come from, the planet, the entire universe and we can feel our self very connected to that. The final stage, we might say, of Yoga Nidra is then taking all of this understandings and integrating them back into our daily life, our relationships, the way we work in the world, so it becomes a very integrative practice that we take into our daily life and so, I think of Yoga Nidra as a complete form of meditation that is a practice of the way of living our life. So, if we look at those 10 practices and look at them in the tradition of Yoga Nidra, we have the sankalpa, the intention, the body sensing, the breath sensing, working with the emotions, working with thoughts, working with joy, and recognizing our interconnected wholeness and non-separation with all of life, which we might call awakening to our true nature or sense of inviting them in the tradition of yoga.

Sharib Khan : Thank you so much for a very, very elaborate and clear understanding. This is really interesting. I am going to get in the panelists, but I just wanted to make a comment. Have you been to Bihar itself? Have you been to Bihar?

Dr. Richard Miller : I haven't been to Bihar. I have been to Chennai. I have been to Bombay. I have been all over different parts of India, but I have yet to make it actually to Bihar, its on my card.

Sharib Khan : I was born 50 miles from the Bihar School of Yoga, so _____.

Dr. Richard Miller : Oh, fantastic.

Sharib Khan : Okay. I am going to get our first panelist on air now. She is Marcela Clavijo. She is a certified junior intermediate 1 Iyengar yoga teacher in New York City and she is also my teacher. I am very blessed and privileged to be able to attend her yoga classes and she is the core faculty of the Iyengar Yoga Institute of New York. Her yoga training includes various trips to India where she studied with the Iyengar family and she has also trained with Patricia Walden and Manuoso Manos who I believe is in San Francisco. Marcela is an ordained Tibetan Buddhist nun in the Saya tradition. She has completed various retreats here in the West and also abroad, and she leads these yoga and meditation retreats several times in the year. So, with that I would request Marcela to come on air and ask her questions and discuss the topic with you. Marcela, you are on air.

Marcela Clavijo : Oh, thank you so much, Sharib, and thank you also for, Dr. Miller, your introduction and your explanation. The program was very, very enlightening. Thank you so much for that.

Dr. Richard Miller : Umm.. Thank you.

Marcela Clavijo : And thanks, Sharib, for having me on the show once again. These have really been very fruitful and really as a yoga practitioner and as a practitioner also of meditation and as a Buddhist nun, I am really happy to participate in these dialogues which really bring together and deepen our understanding of the effects of these disciplines on our life. So, my question was I think I am going to try one question because I want everybody else on the panel to have their time and then if there is more time, I will come back to a second question, Dr. Miller.

Dr. Richard Miller : Sure, wonderful.

Marcela Clavijo : I think I will take my second question. It seems like Yoga Nidra is, it seems to be a very comprehensive approach to meditation in the sense of learning to, as you say, handle and manage one's own experience.

Dr. Richard Miller : Yes.

Marcela Clavijo : And in that way its the science but its also an art.

Dr. Richard Miller : Correct. Yes.

Marcela Clavijo : It provides a framework or a map for understanding how you described the Nidra, which is ship and subtle changes in the state of mind that occur within the practitioner as you are meditating. So, my question was if there are moments in a person's practice where they might go so deep that they are at the edge of their capacity to experience something and form awareness. Are there any practical steps to help some progress along their journey or do you teach any techniques for them to handle any signals that they receive from their body which might be indicators of anxiety or fear or panic?

Dr. Richard Miller : Its a wonderful question, Marcela, and you are absolutely right. Its very important, especially as we navigate into the deeper regions of meditation and what I have often seen is Yoga Nidra as a particular application can take people very deep very quickly.

So, I think its very important to have the intention and the inner resource very well established and what I like to do is weave a sense of inner resource throughout the practice so that as people are meditating, they keep in a way dipping back to a very grounded state of well being and really anchoring into that and then with each step that they take into the practice, they keep weaving back into that sense of ground. I also try to help people create, what I call, continuance of experience so that as they move into deeper regions, they are doing it in a way systematically, step by step slowly. So, for instance, if we are working with an emotion, I often have them put it on a continuum and so that we are working with lesser emotions to get our capacity in place so that we can welcome and work with deeper emotions. Same thing with thoughts, beliefs, imagery. The sensation that can often happen in deep meditation of coming into formlessness or qualities of emptiness or (yeah) seeing through the sense of separation can take the breath away (yes) of a person and I have certainly experienced that at many times and so by having those earlier practices of well being firmly established, knowing how to work with the breath, keep sensing the physical body in the midst of those experiences helps create the ground to be able to tolerate those deeper experiences as you are calling them out. I think also we can engage the practice in different durations, so we can do it in 5-minute, 10-minute, 20-minute, 30-minute, 40-minute segments so that we don't overwhelm the system at first (right). I take a wonderful example from the teachings of _____ who was one of the Dalai Lama teachers who said 7 to 15 minutes, yeah 7 to 15 minutes, and my sense was he was really pointing out that after 5 or 10 minutes, most people start to get distracted, so take a 5-minute meditation or a 15-minute meditation, then step back and incrementally learn how to tolerate, we might say, the deeper meditations that come with time where when I first encountered some of these deep states of formlessness, I felt panic and anxiety, felt fearful, I didn't know where I was going. It was disrupting how my mind held my concepts of what reality is. Luckily, I had teachers who were able then to talk with me, help me understand it, and then go back into the meditation. So, I think its also important to have a teacher, someone who is a guide, who's been there, so they know where we are going, where we are and can help us kind of orient our mind to what's happening. So, I think all of those things are instrumental and very important in building a practice of meditation. Yoga Nidra can be a very deep form of meditation, so its important to have those building blocks in place.

Marcela Clavijo : Yeah. Yeah, that sounds really sound very methodical and progressive. So, thank you so much for that. One last question because I feel I might not get a second go around. (Laughter) Do you have any broadcasts in Spanish? I would be very..

Dr. Richard Miller : We do. We actually have translated our practice into Spanish, French. We are getting it translated into German. We are having a translation (okay) into Arabic and those are, if not yet, will soon be available on our website in those different languages.

Marcela Clavijo : We will look for that. Thank you so much, Dr. Miller. What a pleasure to have spoken with you!

Dr. Richard Miller : Thank you.

Sharib Khan : Thank you, Marcela. I am going to bring a second panelist, Dr. Miller, and she is Mitchelene who is an oncology counselor at Life With Cancer. She is also licensed as a clinical social worker and is a

registered yoga teacher and a certified end-of-life counselor at Life With Cancer where she provides individuals, couples, and family counseling for cancer patients and their loved ones. She has developed a six-week mind-body education, _____ yoga and meditation classes for patients and caregivers and facilitates support groups and speaks to community groups about issues related to cancer. She has got a particular interest in using mind-body practices to strengthen resiliency in cancer patients and their caregivers. With that, Mitchelene, you are on air. Please ask your question with Dr. Miller.

Mitchelene : Hi, good evening! Can you hear me?

Dr. Richard Miller : I can hear you fine. Thank you.

Mitchelene : Okay. Right. Hi! Dr. Miller, let me just say its such a pleasure to speak with you. I actually had a chance to take a workshop of your's two weeks ago in Washington DC.

Dr. Richard Miller : I feel wonderful.

Mitchelene : Yoga symposium, yeah, which was a wonderful gathering. This has all just been really, really rich for me this evening. I had maybe a more specific question around your thought on any overlap between EMDR, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, which for listeners is a form of a protocol used for posttraumatic stress disorder and as I had experienced that and used that myself, I am wondering if you can _____ any similarities between the bilateral stimulation that is used in that modality and what I experience in Yoga Nidra in _____ body first, bringing attention to one side and then the other. I am just wondering if there is any overlap there.

Dr. Richard Miller : Sure. I would love to speak for that. I was actually trained in the early days of EMDR _____ has written extensively in the field of EMDR. What I see is in bilateral stimulation or let's go back a step. For me, every emotion, every thought, every object comes paired into existence with its direct opposite. So, we have dark because we have light. We have sadness because we have happiness. So, everything comes paired with its opposite. When we get stuck in one whole of an opposite we can get frozen and so by contemplating its opposite, we can sometimes liberate that energy that was frozen, unstick it, we might say, and reach an integration and a deeper understanding. In EMDR when I was learning it, we were doing bilateral stimulation from one side of the body to the other or moving the eyes from one side to the other or sound from one ear to the other or tapping one knee to the other. What I came to understand in Yoga Nidra is opposites don't necessarily lie on opposite sides of the body. We can have an opposite that are on opposite sides of the body, but we can also have them below or above one another or we can have opposites enfolded one into the other. So, when I have a person contemplate their particular emotion or belief or sensation and then I ask them to find its opposite, I am always curious because they find it in different places in their body and it might be in the same place as the one that they were contemplating as the opposite. So, Yoga Nidra actually brings that bilateral stimulation, but when I think of bilateral, it can be left, right, front, back, inside, deep, superficial. It depends on the person and their unique experience, but ultimately (yes) we find an integration and a deeper understanding that comes out of contemplating opposites. Its a very crucial aspect, I think, of meditation in general and Yoga Nidra as a specific application of meditation.

Mitchelene : Oh, thank you. That really enriched that. Thank you.

Yeah and you know I am a clinical psychologist and when I have practiced EMDR and integrated the Yoga Nidra into my EMDR practice, I often, instead of asking them to move their eyes, I just do what I do in Yoga Nidra. I ask them to feel whatever it is they are experiencing, their belief, memory, image, thought, and motion, or sensation, feel into their body and if it had an opposite where might they find it in their body and then to have them move bodily or somatically between the two opposites, first feeling one and then sensing its opposite and I guess that's integration without necessarily having to move their eyes or tap with sounds or with somatic tapping.

Mitchelene : Oh, beautiful! Okay. Oh, thank you. Thank you.

Dr. Richard Miller : You are welcome.

Sharib Khan : So, Dr. Miller, I would actually like to discuss this a little further. I myself have been giving a lot of thought on that emotions come in pairs and so question on this is have you through your meditation practices been able to make a comprehensive list of all emotions and what pairs they come up with and is there a mind-body map of which part of the body gets stimulated by which, you know, emotions? Just like we have a sensory map of the body on the brain, is there a similar map that you have been able to develop or put together?

Dr. Richard Miller : In a manner of speaking yes and in a manner of speaking no. I find that if we look at the general population and say we take an emotion like happiness or sadness or grief or anger or any emotion, most people generally tend to experience it in similar places in their body, but there are so many people who experience it in other places of their body too that I can't really say I could draw a map of emotions. I really rely on the individual, so it becomes a really individual exploration and so maps are, like any map, useful in a general kind of way, but once we are actually in the territory we need to abandon the map and we are really relying then on the first hand experience of the meditator. So, I really use Yoga Nidra as a tool to help them investigate their own map and create their own body mapping and two people might have very different body mapping, but they are experiencing similar states. (Umm...) I like the idea of Yoga Nidra and meditation in general as a very individual specific practice that's helping a person really develop their own first hand understanding so they are free in a way of authority, they are free of outside externalized maps. They are really mapping their own self.

Sharib Khan : And what about the list of emotions that come as pairs? Is there something like that or is it just, its not possible to really enumerate all the emotions into pairs?

Dr. Richard Miller : Well, over the years I developed pages and pages emotions and their different tones and descriptions that people have given me and I use them as kind of catalytical thoughts when I am teaching, so I might bring them up as representative examples, but I am always interested in the individual, like I will ask a person, "So what's the emotion you are experiencing? Where do you experience it in your body and if you describe it, how would you describe it?" and I get such unique descriptions, its hard then to create a kind of a rigid map. So, I have maps, but I must say I abandon them the moment I really start working with an individual. They are useful for teaching a group of people some of the core concepts, but when we get to the actual individual I think its a very, highly specific practice and so when I am actually giving training I am teaching people how to deliver Yoga Nidra to groups, but I am also teaching them how to work with individuals. The way I had like to teach Yoga Nidra and meditation is while teaching to a group, everybody in the room should feel like they are developing their own particular style of Yoga Nidra, so that they really made it their own.

Sharib Khan : I think that's the challenge as a teacher. Yeah, I mean it has to _____ with such variety. With that, I am going to bring our third panelist, Dashama, who is a yoga and fitness expert with 10+ years in the industry, training, coaching, and consulting clients and companies. She is a creative dynamo in the field. She has been a multimedia producer with numerous videos, books, and DVDs that have been featured on Oprah, Walmart, Barnes&Noble, and Target and is widely available with some of the leading retailers. She is a YouTube phenomenon with her online channel, receiving more than 8 million views. So, with that, Dashama, you are online and you can ask your question with Dr. Miller.

Dashama : Hi! Thank you so much. I am really grateful to be here at such synchronistic timing of the topic actually, Dr. Miller, and its interesting, recently I have been having this online cyber stalker that's schizophrenic and it made me think about Yoga Nidra and how essentially it may be able to help people with that type of mental disorder. My own mother had schizophrenia as well and so I understand to some extent this mental disorder, but, you know, its just I have been dealing with it now online because the cyber stalker _____ connect with me and very interesting things coming up, a lot of things from within myself, but also I just wanted to ask have you all had any experience with that type of patients with mental disorders of that nature and essentially what could Yoga Nidra do to help that type of individual?

Dr. Richard Miller : I have actually. I worked in the psychiatric unit years ago and utilized principles of Yoga Nidra with patients that I was working with. I was in a psychiatric ward with patients who were schizophrenic actively and psychotic at times and often called in to work with an individual who was agitated or having a moment of extreme difficulty or beginning to go into a psychosis and I found that the underlying principle of Yoga Nidra really has stood me in good stead. The underlying principle behind Yoga Nidra is what I call welcoming. I can go into the Sanskrit words, but I call it the principle of welcoming and radical acceptance for really accepting the moment just as it is and then looking at what is our particular, perfect I would say, response to that moment. It gives way to a sense of harmony within our self and the world, so when I am working with someone who is deeply disturbed, like schizophrenic or psychotic, I am really trying to enter into their experience and having them describe to me the world that they are in, in a way joining them. There's a wonderful saying that two people can't occupy the same space. If you do, one needs to leave and I found when I really invited someone who was going into a psychotic episode to really describe to me their experience, they often in a way became more integrated and in a way talked themselves somewhat out of their psychosis deepening on how severe it was. So, I find if we can really meet the person and that they feel met, it can often have an integrating effect on them because so many people in a schizophrenic moment or psychotic moment feel isolated, alienated. They feel a sense of deep separation and by their feeling someone is actually hearing them and listening to them can have a deeply healing effect. That said, I well appreciate also that sometimes the most effective response that we need to have to another person is to put borders or boundaries around them so that they are protected and we are protected, so when I think of a perfect response that doesn't preclude setting boundaries, borders, a sense of differentiation, but I still would say that than can include this deep core sense of welcoming where we truly know that the other person isn't other than our self and so our intervention with them really is based on love and kindness and compassion and yet sometimes we do need to set limits and we need to set borders and boundaries to protect our self and people around us or the person himself, but short statement to your question was yep, I feel this can be a very effective tool amongst other tools when we are working with someone like a stalker or someone who is disturbed, unbalanced, but we need always to be going slowly, carefully, and make sure that we are respecting our own borders and boundaries each step of the way, but I love this principle of welcoming. Its really based on a deep understanding that every moment arrives with its perfect response and so in every situation we find our self and Yoga Nidra is helping us discover that perfect response within our self that when we engage it we feel a sense of harmony and rightness and it gives way, I think, to a sense of harmony with the world around us. The root of the word dharma is actually a beautiful Sanskrit word _____ which means to be in total harmony with the universe and I think when we are really in touch with our self through these healing practices of yoga, we are living our dharma, where we really do feel connected to the world around us and I think then the people we interact can at some level feel that, that we are not trying to change them or hurt them. They can sense that there is an underlying love in our relationship with them.

Dashama : I have another question if you don't mind. So, some people have suggested that I would attract a schizophrenic stalker because my mother was schizophrenic and it felt like that was something my soul needs to reconcile with this and I wonder just from your perspective because if I need to be to be quite in touch with the true essence of yoga _____ What is your perspective on that type of response?

Dr. Richard Miller : I think life is a mystery and I think as human beings we love to sit around the campfire and tell campfire stories. We don't really know what anything is, we don't know why we do what we do, and we don't know why another does what they do. We can tell a story about it, but I think ultimately its a story, so the bottomline for me is to let go of those kinds of beliefs and really ask what is my true action in this moment to this moment or to this person and let go of stories. Our job, I think, is to let go of beliefs and really look squarely at the moment and try to feel what is the most appropriate action we need to take. Is it true that I need to be with a schizophrenic because my mom was a schizophrenic? I don't know. That's a belief. I don't know whether its true or false, so I don't go either trying to deny it or affirm it. I am more interested in stepping back and asking what do I need to do in this moment, that by doing it I feel a sense of harmony in my life and it gives me a sense of harmony in relationship to the entire universe and world. I think ultimately that's what our practices of yoga are leading us into that we really don't know what anything is and we are really willing to face the mystery squarely and put in a way our rational mind aside and really just meet the moment right in its entirety.

Dashama : I agree. I really appreciate your response. Thank you so much.

Dr. Richard Miller : Ummm... You are welcome. Thank you, Dashama.

Dr. Richard Miller : I hear some silence on the line. I am hoping Sharib is still present and that we are still on and...

Sharib Khan : Yes. I was a little muted for a little bit (laughter) given the background noise, but I am going to say I am going to invite...

Dr. Richard Miller : They don't like silence in radio shows. (Laughter).

Sharib Khan : Yeah. My office can get a little noisy. I want to invite our last panelist, Carol, and I know we are running a little bit above the usual schedule on the call. Carol has spent 25 years as special educator and outdoor enthusiast. She found yoga in 1998 after an injury and practiced _____ natural fit in exploring the physicality of asthma as well as the connection of the self to the natural world. That's really nicely put. After a life-altering diagnosis of multiple myeloma in 2003, yoga became a prominent part in Carol's healing process and she completed a 500-hour yoga teacher training program with an emphasis on therapeutics and she has now founded Yoga for Cancer Care where she is offering cancer care classes and restorative classes as part of her activities and she is also an assistant instructor for teacher training at Yoga Loka. So with that, Carol, I will invite you to have a quick discussion with Dr. Miller. So, Carol, you are on air.

Carol : Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much, Dr. Miller. I love your work and I really battled for a long time with my cancer treatments and all of that and see your recordings from the meditative part of yoga. That was like the only thing I could do for about four years and I would do it morning and night and I have to say it was life changing for me to be able to find that connection and look beyond my own suffering and all that. So, thank you for your work, so I will be brief here. Since I just teach yoga for cancer care and we do work with the koshas and manners, you know, like you suggest in your Yoga Nidra process and one of those things, often times people who come to my classes are not experienced meditators and all that and as our first panelist suggested and yourself, its difficult to delve into their emotional realm, so would you suggest like a process where, you know, one week become familiar with welcoming in other senses of the body and then move forward like that and sort of just skim the emotional (laughter) (yeah) contact for a while?

Dr. Richard Miller : Actually when I teach Yoga Nidra in an 8-class segment or a 12-week segment, I teach it incrementally because, as you say, a person could get deeply overwhelmed by going in too quickly. So, I do teach the intention, the body sensing, the breathing, the well being, the resource first and try to get that well established and then wade into feeling comes first, then emotions and I try to get people to raise their emotions so they take little ones first, big ones later. That said, sometimes we don't have that luxury. In some of our research, we are given the whole protocol from day 1 and we still found extraordinary results. So, it really depends on the person, but I agree with you, (right) I think we need to take our time carefully because this is a very powerful intervention.

Carol : Yes and some of the emotions are jumping, especially with trauma and cancer as part of the trauma experience. So, their emotions are just like right up there and jumping out of...

Dr. Richard Miller : I think it also begs the question of when do we give the intervention to a group and when do we really then need to work with the individual because if we are working with an individual, I am really in relationship with them now and so if deep emotions are happening, I am more able to help them with it than if they were just in group.

Carol : Yes, great! And I will ask two other brief questions. So, is the iRest a short version or is it a single version or is it available in...

Dr. Richard Miller : Its a 10-step protocol, so we have it in a long version, but we have it in 35 mins, 18 mins, 5 mins (Oh, okay! Oh, okay!) segments and I am re-recording it so we have each of the actual 10 steps

in their own individual practices with multiple versions.

Carol : Great! So, there's like a 20-minute version?

Dr. Richard Miller : Correct.

Carol : Great and that seems like a time frame that when I suggest to other people a workable time frame often instead of, you know, (absolutely, yeah) 40 minutes and my last question, if you were to recommend an optimum time of day to practice Yoga Nidra?

Dr. Richard Miller : Oh, absolutely, whenever we can do it. (Laughter) You know practically in the morning if possible because then we are not thinking when am I going to get it in during the rest of the day or in the middle of the afternoon we will take a kind of a Yoga Nidra nap, but really, fundamentally, whenever we can do it, so we do it.

Carol : Great. (Laughter). Okay. Thank you so much and I thank you so much for your work and I advise it all the time to all of my students in the...

Dr. Richard Miller : Thank you, Carol. I really deeply appreciate what you said at the beginning on how we are serving it. Thank you.

Carol : Yeah and sometimes I give a little _____ the beginning like a tourist map saying _____ great language.

Dr. Richard Miller : Yeah. Thank you.

Sharib Khan : Well, Dr. Miller, we have questions coming up from the audience and I think we might have a few people who want to come on air, but before I bring them on air, I will rush through a few of these questions. I know we are going a little above time. Interesting question that I am seeing is that somebody has asked us that in your work with the military, you speak to people who have been to war and have experienced terrible violent things. Do you ever feel that you are being dishonest when you say there is a love center to all of us. Is there ever a sense of diminishing or speaking down to that experience?

Dr. Richard Miller : I found it very interesting to address this. You know, I don't. I feel like the first thing that I want to show everyone is that there is something within and its never been hurt, harmed, or damaged by the experience they have been through and through the practice of Yoga Nidra, I feel I can help people find that very quickly so that they can really feel that sense of deep wholeness within themselves, its never been injured. I am a pragmatic optimistic. I really do feel each and every person has this centered in us. We are all trying to be happy, going about it in our own unique ways. Sometimes they are destructive and sometimes they are more constructive, but I think as a teacher my job is to really help a person locate that within themselves and then to really amplify it, nourish it as we go into the other aspects of the practice. No, I don't think it is speaking down, I think its, we need to say it, its a direct teaching that I think is very important.

Sharib Khan : Uh hmm... I might have a listener. So, person dialing, I think, via Skype, I am going to bring you on air if you have a question to ask Dr. Miller. (Pause) Are you there, person dialing on Skype, number 111. If you would like to ask a question, you are on air right now. (Pause) Looks like we might be having some difficulty. Another person with number 650, if you would like to ask your question, we will bring you on air right now.

Shweta : Yeah. Hi,Sharib. This is Shweta here. Thanks for taking my call. Can you hear me?

Sharib Khan : Uh hmm... Yes, yes, you are on air.

Shweta : Okay. Yeah. Right. Thanks a lot. Dr. Miller, it was very interesting listening to you all this while and the panelists as well. You mentioned that Yoga Nidra helps in developing well being and wholeness and

connectedness and non-separateness. I was just wondering what goes on in our mind clinically if you can throw a little bit of light on that. What happens to the... Are there any studies which have investigated the clinical parameters of stress such as epinephrine and cortisol or _____?

Dr. Richard Miller : We are doing that ourselves and I am also very much reading the literature on meditation that's coming out in the last number of years, so we do have a better sense of these approaches and what they are doing to the brain. I know when we are doing Yoga Nidra meditation in general, certain parts of our brain, the limbic system that tends to hold us hostage to emotion is being more regulated. We are actually thickening the cortex and the hippocampus which gives us more perspective and allows us to see a better sense of the consequences of our actions. We are also seeing how different centers, a recent research study that I was looking at was showing how the cognitive, the somatic, and other perceptual centers in the brain were all starting to link together and forming new connections while they were meditating, in short its three or four meditations, I should say. So, we do see really a dramatic change going on in the brain. Do we understand it? I don't think so. We are just seeing these consequences in the body. We see the lowering of cortisol. We see the deepening of serotonin and oxytocin and endorphin being exhibited during meditation, total perceptual changes in our perception of pain. Its quite extraordinary and we get them very quickly.

Shweta : Oh, okay. Yeah. That was going to be my next question. What is the minimum duration after which you start seeing any positive effects of Yoga Nidra? You just mentioned that in only three or four meditation sessions you start seeing lowering of cortisol and stuff.

Dr. Richard Miller : We actually see them in the initial session, so many people come back to us after their first session, especially people who have sleep disturbances and they say they got their first night's sleep in many years or months.

We see people go into remission very quickly with pain or change their perception of pain after only one or two sessions, so we do see results right away with many people. Others, it does take some time to build the effect in, but I would say, you know, in four sessions of meditation we are already seeing changes actually in the hard core structures of the brain.

Shweta : Okay. That's interesting to know and I would really love to learn more of literature from your lab or your studies. It was quite interesting to listen to you. Thank you.

Dr. Richard Miller : Yeah, I do recommend, there's a wonderful book by a friend of mine, Linda Graham, called Bouncing Back where she really goes into some of the neuroscience happening in these approaches. It is extraordinary to see that in as little as one to three or four sessions we can have changes in the brain and my understanding after about 13 or 14 sessions, those changes actually stay in place. So, we see a change over time that actually remains steady. The more we practice obviously, the greater the change we are going to see.

Sharib Khan : I think it is all, Dr. Miller. I think we are running out of time now and I don't want to hold you or the panelists and the audience longer. I think we have had a very fruitful discussion and with that I would like to thank you for taking the time out to discuss Yoga Nidra with us and thanks to all the panelists for once again supporting the show and coming on to have a very interesting discussion, Dr. Miller. The recording of the show will be available and Priya will send you details on how to access the recording and we hope to continue bringing on more experts like Dr. Miller and discussing yoga and its benefits for health and wellness and would love your support in talking to students or your associates about the show and hopefully they find it useful as well. Thank you, all, very much. We had a wonderful evening and look forward to having you all some time again in the future on our next yoga panel.

Dr. Richard Miller : Thank you, Sharib, a wonderful show.

Sharib Khan : Thank you, all. Bye, bye.

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