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**Preparation:** Please get ready for yoga nidra. Lie down on your back on the floor and adopt the pose called shavasana. In this position the body should be straight from head to toe, the legs slightly apart and the arms a little away from the body, with the palms of the hands turned upwards. *(pause)* Adjust everything, your body, position and clothes, until you are completely comfortable. During yoga nidra there should be no physical movement. *(pause)* Close your eyes and keep them strictly closed until you are told to open them. Take a deep breath and as you breathe out feel the cares and worries of the day flow out of you. *(pause)*

In the practice which follows you are going to develop the feeling of relaxation in the body. It is not necessary to make movements or deliberately relax your muscles, simply develop the feeling of relaxation. *(pause)* It is like the feeling you have just before sleep...when relaxation becomes deep, sleep does come but you should try to keep yourself completely awake, this is very important. Make a resolution to yourself now that 'I will not sleep, I will remain awake throughout the practice.' *(pause)*

During yoga nidra you are functioning on the levels of hearing and awareness, and the only important thing is to follow the voice of the instructor. *(pause)* You must not try to intellectualize or analyze the instructions as this will disturb your mental relaxation. Simply follow the voice with total attention and feeling, and if thoughts come to disturb you from time to time, do not worry, just continue the practice. *(pause)* Allow yourself to become calm and steady...when you are doing the practice yourself, allow five minutes for this. Do not start too suddenly. *(pause)*

**Relaxation:** Now bring about a feeling of inner relaxation in the whole body...concentrate on the body and become aware of the importance of complete stillness. *(pause)* Develop your awareness of the body from the top of the head to the tips of the toes and mentally repeat the mantra...
O-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Complete stillness and complete awareness of the whole body...again O-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Continue your awareness of the whole body...the whole body...the whole body. (long pause) Become aware of the fact that you are going to practise yoga nidra...say mentally to yourself, 'I am aware...I am going to practise yoga nidra...repeat this to yourself again. (pause) The practice of yoga nidra begins now.

Resolve: At this moment you should make your resolve. (pause) The resolve will have to be very simple...try to discover one naturally. You must develop a resolve to say at this time. (pause) It should be a short, positive statement in simple language...stated three times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. (pause) The resolve you make during yoga nidra is bound to come true in your life. (pause)

Rotation of consciousness: We now begin rotation of consciousness, rotation of awareness by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible the awareness is to go from part to part. Repeat the part in your mind and simultaneously become aware of that part of the body. Keep yourself alert but do not concentrate too intensely. Become aware of the right hand. (pause)

Right side: Right hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, become aware of your palm, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the right waist, the right hip, the right thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the right foot, the top of the foot, the big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe...

Left side: Become aware of the left hand thumb, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, fifth finger, palm of the hand, back of the hand, the wrist, the lower arm, the elbow, the upper arm, the shoulder, the armpit, the left waist, the left hip, the left thigh, the kneecap, the calf muscle, the ankle, the heel, the sole of the left foot, the
top of the foot, the big toe, second toe, third toe, fourth toe, fifth toe...

**Back:** Now to the back. Become aware of the right shoulderblade, the left shoulderblade...the right buttock, the left buttock...the spine...the whole back together...

**Front:** Now go to the top of the head. The top of the head, the forehead, both sides of the head, the right eyebrow, the left eyebrow, the space between the eyebrows, the right eyelid, the left eyelid, the right eye, the left eye, the right ear, the left ear, the right cheek, the left cheek, the nose, the tip of the nose, the upper lip, the lower lip, the chin, the throat, the right chest, the left chest, the middle of the chest, the navel, the abdomen...

**Major parts:** The whole of the right leg...the whole of the left leg...both legs together. (pause) The whole of the right arm...the whole of the left arm...both arms together. (pause) The whole of the back, buttocks, spine, shoulderblades...the whole of the front, abdomen, chest...the whole of the back and front...together...the whole of the head...the whole body together...the whole body together...the whole body together.

*Repeat one or two rounds gradually decreasing speed.*

Please do not sleep...total awareness...no sleeping...no movement. (pause) The whole body on the floor, become aware of your body lying on the floor. (pause) Your body is lying on the floor, see your body lying perfectly still on the floor. in this room. (pause) Visualize this image in your mind. (long pause).

**Breathing:** Become aware of your breath. (pause) Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. (pause) Do not try to change the rhythm, the breathing is natural, automatic...you are not doing it, there is no effort. (pause) Maintain awareness of your breath, continue...complete awareness of breath. (long pause)

Now concentrate your awareness on the movement of your navel area...concentrate on your navel movements. (pause) Your navel is rising and falling slightly with every
breath, with each and every breath it expands and contracts... concentrate on this movement in synchronization with your breath. (pause) Go on practising, but be sure that you are aware. (long pause) Now start counting your breaths backwards from 27 to 1, like this: 27 navel rising, 27 navel falling, 26 navel rising, 26 navel falling, 25 navel rising, 25 navel falling, and so on. Say the words and numbers mentally to yourself as you count your breaths. (pause) Be sure that you don't make a mistake; if you do, you must go back to 27 and start again. (long pause) With total awareness that you are counting, go on counting from 27 to 1. (long pause) Keep on with the practice... no mistakes. (long pause)
Now stop your counting of the navel breath and shift your attention to the chest, please shift to the chest. (pause) Your chest is rising and falling slightly with each and every breath, become aware of this. (pause) Continue concentrating on the movement of the chest and start counting backwards from 27 to 1, in the same way as before... 27 chest rising, 27 chest falling, 26 chest rising, 26 chest falling, 25 chest rising, 25 chest falling, and so on. Again repeat the words and numbers mentally to yourself as you count. (long pause) No mistakes, if you make a mistake you must go back to the start again, to 27. (long pause) Continue counting, 27 to 1, keep on with the practice, counting and awareness, awareness and counting. (long pause)
Cease your counting of the chest breaths and move your awareness to the throat, please move to the throat. (pause) Become aware of your breath moving in and out of the throat... become aware of this. (pause) Concentrate on the movement of the breath and start counting backwards from 27 to 1 in the same way as before... complete awareness of counting and the breath. (long pause) No sleeping please, just total awareness that you are counting. (long pause) Keep on with the practice, continue counting your breaths in the throat. (long pause)
Stop counting and go now to the nostrils...become aware of the breath moving in and out of the nostrils. (pause) Concentrate on the movement of the breath in and out of the nostrils and start counting as before, you know it very well by now, 27 breathing in, 27 breathing out. (long pause) Complete awareness please, continue counting, no mistakes. (long pause) Keep on with the practice, continue. (long pause)

**Image visualization:** Stop your counting and leave your breathing...we now come to visualization. (pause) A number of different things will be named and you should try to develop a vision of them on all levels...feeling, awareness, emotion, imagination, as best you can... (pause) If you are able to find this vision your relaxation is complete for the time being...and if you are not able to, then you need a little more practice. (pause)

Burning candle...burning candle...burning candle...endless desert...endless desert...endless desert...Egyptian pyramid...Egyptian pyramid...Egyptian pyramid...torrential rain...torrential rain...torrential rain...snow capped mountains...snow capped mountains...snow capped mountains...snow capped mountains...Greek temple at sunrise...Greek temple at sunrise...Greek temple at sunrise...coffin beside a grave...coffin beside a grave...coffin beside a grave...birds flying across a sunset...birds flying across a sunset...birds flying across a sunset...red clouds drifting...red clouds drifting...red clouds drifting...a cross above a church...a cross above a church...a cross above a church...stars at night...stars at night...stars at night...full moon...full moon...full moon...full moon...smiling Buddha...smiling Buddha...smiling Buddha...wind from the sea...wind from the sea...wind from the sea...waves breaking on a deserted beach...waves breaking on a deserted beach...the restless sea...eternal restless sea...eternal restless sea...waves breaking on a deserted beach...beach... (long pause)

**Resolve:** Now is the time to repeat your resolve...repeat the same resolve that you made at the beginning of the
practice, do not change it...repeat the resolve three times with full awareness and feeling. (pause)

Finish: Relax all efforts, draw your mind outside and become aware of your breathing...become aware of the natural breath. (pause) Awareness of the whole body, and awareness of breathing. (pause) Your body is lying totally relaxed on the floor...you are breathing quietly and slowly. (pause) Develop awareness of your body from the top of the head to the tips of the toes and say mentally in your mind O-o-o-o-m-m-m. (pause) Repeat O-o-o-o-m-m-m mentally to yourself twice more. (pause) Become aware of the floor, and the position of your body lying on the floor...visualize the room around you, become aware of your surroundings. (pause) Lie quietly for some time and keep your eyes closed. (pause) Start moving your body and stretching yourself. Please take your time, do not hurry. (pause) When you are sure that you are wide awake, sit up slowly and open your eyes. The practice of yoga nidra is now complete.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Alternative short practices
The practice of yoga nidra can also be adapted for use as a short relaxation in the workplace or as a prelude to sleep.

As an interlude at work: For the purpose of relaxation, the essential elements of this form of yoga nidra are rotation of consciousness and counting of breaths. These elements can be easily adapted to allow for practice in the workplace or at home, if a short break of five to twenty minutes presents itself. Additional flexibility is provided by the breathing practice, from which any number or combination of the four parts can be chosen as required. The following is an example of a practice suitable for the office or home, or wherever some privacy can be obtained.

Lock the door, switch off the light and draw the curtains or blinds. Make a mental note of how soon you want the
practice to finish (e.g. 10 minutes). Lie down on the floor or a couch and close your eyes. Commence relaxing the body by lying quietly in the shavasana position for a short time. Let your mind wander around the environment listening to sounds reaching you from outside; don’t analyze or intellectualize these sounds, just become aware of them as something external. Bring your attention to the body, take a deep breath and as you breathe out feel yourself letting go. Focus your mind on the meeting points between your body and the floor and develop this feeling for a couple of minutes. Then rotate your consciousness quickly around the body starting with the right thumb and moving in the same fashion described in the practice (right side, left side, back, front, major parts). Become aware of your natural breath. Focus your attention on the breath as it moves in and out of the nostrils (or focus on the throat, chest or navel as desired). Maintain your awareness of this for some time. Count the breaths backwards from 11 to 1 (or 27 to 1 if there is time). Stop counting and take a long, deep breath. Lie quietly for a few moments and stretch yourself slowly. Open your eyes and get up. This completes the practice.

While it is possible to practise yoga nidra sitting or standing, this is not recommended here. The distinctive feature of this form of relaxation is systematic rotation of consciousness around the body, and this gives best results in the prone position. If quick mental relaxation is required and only a chair is available, for example in the kitchen while the dinner cooks or in the bus on the way home from work, then it is best to practise awareness of the breath only, particularly mental awareness of alternate nostril breathing (anuloma viloma).

The procedure is similar to the one above. Once again become as still as possible and let your body become loose. Then check yourself quickly for particular areas of tension and try to relax them. Are you frowning? Is your neck stiff? Are your hands clenched? Tense all the muscles in your body internally and then let them relax; repeat this. Focus
your attention on the breath moving in and out of the nostrils and maintain your awareness of this for some moments. Imagine that the breath moves in and out of the nostrils alternately; in left, out right, in right, out left, and so on. Start counting the breaths backwards from 27 to 1 (or whatever number you think is appropriate for the time available). Continue this practice for as long as required. When you want to finish, leave the counting and again become aware of the body. Before you get up, take a deep breath and stretch yourself fully. This completes the practice.

As a prelude to sleep: In cases of insomnia or overexcitement of the mind, yoga nidra can also be used to induce sleep. Start by switching off the light and getting into bed. Adopt the shavasana position and rest your head on the pillow, although this should not be too high. Allow your hands to relax into the most comfortable position, probably palms down. If you have a sagging mattress it may be a good idea to support it with boards underneath. The procedure is the same as for the first short practice. Start by listening to external sounds and then become aware of the meeting points between your body and the bed. Follow this with two or three rotations of consciousness around the body and this will normally put you to sleep. If necessary you can continue the practice with mental alternate nostril breathing, starting at 54 and counting backwards to 1. If sleep does not come, a good idea would be to take some exercise before going to bed, for example a long walk, or 15 minutes of surya namaskara.