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The Ancient Antidote To Modern Stress

By Howard VanEs

Anyone who has ever taken a yoga class will tell you that perhaps the most important as well as the

most enjoyable posture is the final relaxation pose at the end of class which is known as Shavasana. Shavasana, which translates to "corpse pose" is a time when the body and mind quiet and the door to stillness, peace and inner healing is opened. The benefits of Shavasana are many including reduced stress, deep relaxation, balanced emotions, lower blood pressure, helpful for insomnia and leaves the practitioner feeling renewed and refreshed as if they have had a min-vacation for body and mind. And I would be remiss if I didn't say Shavasana just feels good! It is here - in this deep state of relaxation, where natural healing on all levels can occur.

"The stresses of modern civilization are a strain on the nerves for which Shavasana is the best antidote." BKS Iyengar in Light on Yoga.

To experience shavasana come onto your back - preferably on the floor but a firm bed can work as well. Your legs should be approximately hip width apart, allowing your feet to drop to the sides. Bring your arms to 45% to your body with the palms facing up and your head neck and spine into one line. Let your breath deepen and feel the support of the floor under you - releasing into it. Draw your consciousness deep inside. Remain here for ten to twenty minutes. To come out of the posture take a few deep breaths and then begin to wiggle your fingers and toes. Gently roll your head from side to side. Feel free to stretch your body in anyway that might feel good to you now. Then roll to your right side into a fetal position. Rest here for a moment. Then very slowly press up to a seated position with the help of your right and left hands. Sit for a moment with your eyes closed and then slowly open your eyes looking down at the floor. Before beginning shavasana, please read the rest of this article for helpful tips to enrich your experience.

The more relaxed your body is the quieter your mind can become. To deepen your experience of Shavasana, I have listed a few suggestions for deepening your comfort, quieting your mind and for addressing special challenges.

For deepening your comfort:

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Eye Pillows: Placing an eye pillow over your eyes is soothing, helps to relax the muscles around your eyes, and sends a strong message to your brain to relax. Eye pillows can also be placed on your forehead or into your hands, which gives a feeling of grounding and relaxation.

Blankets: Essentially anywhere your body touches the floor is a candidate for support and as a result will help you relax. You might wish to experiment with the following suggestions:

Arms: Place folded blankets under the length of your arms.

Back: Fold a blanket the length of your spine and place a second blanket horizontally across one end of the blanket making a letter "T". Sit at the edge of the vertical blanket so that when you lay back your sacrum (the bony part of your spine between your hips) is on the floor, your lower back and spine on the blanket, and your head supported by the horizontal blanket.

Heels: Slightly rolled blanket can be placed under your Achilles tendons.

Suggestions for special challenges in Shavasana:

Lower back challenges: Place a rolled blanket, pillow or bolster under your knees.

Neck challenges: Place a folded blanket under your head or a rolled towel under your neck.

Pregnancy: Raise your torso by placing a bolster, pillows or two to three folded blankets under your back and be sure to support your head with another folded blanket. (If you are using blankets under your back should run the length of your spine from your lower back to the tip of your head) Another option is lay on your right side in fetal position with a folded blanket between your knees. Place a folded blanket under your head for support.

For an agitated/active mind: Place a yoga block or a thick book behind your head and put a sandbag on it so that 1/3 of the sandbag is on your forehead. This helps to quiet your mind. Also focus on making your exhalations longer than your inhalations. (Note: a homemade sandbag can be made by filling a soft pillow case with rice approximately 1/4 way and tying it off.)

You may also wish to place a blanket over you, as your body will cool down when relaxed.

Howard VanEs, M.A. has been studying and practicing yoga for over thirteen years and is a certified yoga instructor teaching in the East Bay area of San Francisco. He is author of "Beginning Yoga: A Practice Manual", co-creator of the audio CD "Shavasana / Deep Relaxation".

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Three Golden Ways & Steps To Mar Stress...

By Ashish Jain

Ask a literary person how to deal with stress & he will say you, do it the way Shakespeare, Wordsworth & Shelley did. Or, read the positivity of their writings and you will be stress free.

Ask a modern stress management guru & he will come out with a whole set of CDs, manuals and modern techniques to beat the stress.

...different people have different ways to mar the stress.

What do you prefer? The object is one Stress Management. Let's find out one by one how you can lead a stress free life.

Step 1: Gush into the literature:

"UNDER the greenwood tree, Who loves to lie with me, And turn his merry note Unto the sweet bird's throat, Come hither, come hither, come hither: Here shall he see No enemy But winter and rough weather -William Shakespeare

Then let not what I cannot have My cheer of mind destroy; Whilst thus I sing, I am a king, Although a poor blind boy. -Colley Cibber

Its simple. Just read the above lines again and again, and get at the meaning of the words, through your heart!

Step 2: Introspect

What is stress? Stress is the state of your mind!

What is mind? Mind is a bundle of thoughts.

When your mind unnecessarily ponders about the bundle of thoughts, stress takes control of your personality!

What is the solution then? The stressful thoughts will have to be changed to sincere and pleasing thoughts– and as the wise saying goes:

When the Thoughts are changed, the Mind is changed, When the Mind is changed, the Man is changed, When the Man is changed, the Society is changed, When the Society is changed, the Nation is changed, And when the Nations change for the better, we say there is plenty and prosperity all over the world!

It is so simple—oh, man, you have complicated the issue, beyond the tolerable proportions and that is the reason for your stress!

Step 3: The modern stress management techniques:

All the modern stress management techniques, the lengthy lectures on causes of stress, the bulky books on the subject, become a kindergarten stuff, as compared to your ability to control your mind. When you establish control on the rapid and agile movements of the mind, where is stress?

Do not think that by controlling the mind, you are curbing its normal and useful activities. It is just like the horse, galloping ahead, but well-controlled by the reins!

If the stress is related to your health, it is another matter, it needs to be tackled in consultations with health professionals and good psychologists. Severe health problems, combined with stress, can be fatal also. Share your views, sorrows and health related concerns with your friends and well-wishers. You may get valuable advice and unburdening the stressful thoughts in your mind, will itself relieve you to a great extent!

The mind tools, thus, have a definite role to play in taking the stress out of your personality.

Ashish Jain writes about many different topics. For more information on stress management visit

<http://www.aboutstressmanagement.com>

and also visit the main articles page:

<http://www.www.aboutstressmanagement.com/index.html>

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