

FINDING SAFE SANCTUARY

Creating the neural pathways of healing through yoga nidra

“The attainment of wholeness requires one to stake one’s whole being. Nothing less will do; there can be no easier conditions, no substitutes, no compromises.”

C. G. Jung – *Swiss Psychiatrist (1875-1961)*

We know that in clinical populations in mental health, the prevalence rates of trauma is at 90% or more (Clark, Classen, Fourn & Shetty, 2015; Clinic Community Health Centre, 2013; National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, 2006) and it is reported by Mathieu (2011) that 60% of clinical staff working in Canadian healthcare environments report histories of trauma *before* they enter the helping profession (p. 13).

In this 75-minute workshop participants will be introduced to the mind-body practice of *yoga nidra* (Lusk, 2015). This practice comes to us from the Yoga tradition. Yoga nidra is a guided meditation practice that brings people to a deeper state of relaxation and helps to break self-limiting patterns that are held in the body and mind after trauma. The healing effects of yoga nidra for trauma are based on the principles of neuroplasticity, creating new neural pathways that promote safety and well-being, and weaken neural pathways that maintain hypervigilance and chronic stress (Graham, 2013). When practiced over time, trauma survivors train their brains to self-regulate without conscious effort and in a way that is appropriate to their current situation.

Yoga nidra promotes self-directed neuroplasticity of the brain in specific ways through the different stages of the practice. These stages include setting an intention, finding an inner resource, awareness of breath, body scan, welcoming feelings, witnessing thoughts, the experience of joy, observe self, and reflect on the practice. Each of these stages are experienced at different levels of conscious processing as one is guided into different brain states that supports healing in both body and mind.

In recent years, there has been accumulating evidence that this practice is demonstrating therapeutic benefits in helping trauma survivors manage and support their healing and recovery journeys (Miller, 2015; Fritts & Khusid, 2014; Pence, 2014). The session will provide an overview of the practice and situate the practice within an embodied discipline that supports healing. Participants will begin to develop a comfortable stance of welcoming for all thoughts, feelings, and sensations (Treleaven, 2018).

Participants will have an opportunity to experience some of the layers that comprise the practice of yoga nidra. The foundational skillset is accessing the relaxation response by activating the parasympathetic nervous system to calm the stress-response system and reduce emotional over-reactivity by turning down the set point of hypervigilance and anxiety (Martin, et al., 2015; Benson & Proctor, 2012; Jerath, et al., 2006; Elliot & Edmondson, 2005).

The second skillset is gaining an orientation to interoceptive awareness – internal body awareness, being present in the body, and awareness of the body in space (Craig, 2015; Anderson, 2007). Interoceptive awareness will be accessed through the conscious access and direction of the breath as a quality of moving energy (Brown & Gerbarg, 2012; Marks-Tarlow, 2012; Fogel, 2009).

The third skillset introduces us to developing the ability to hold opposite feelings and emotions. Miller (2012) explains:

When you observe emotions during iRest[®] you are learning to take a step back from the emotions in order to observe them from a state of pure awareness, instead of letting the emotions consume you as they sometimes do in regular life (p. 4).

This practice provides a foundation for affect regulation (Fosha, 2008; Schore, 2003).

The fourth skillset invites one to create an imaginal inner sanctuary of safety – our inner resource that is the basis of our healing intelligence (Davenport, 2016; Maller & Genstler, 2017). Developing feelings of safety in the body is what Porges (2017) refers to as *neuroception* in the support of a resilient and secure base and attachment (Fay 2017; Brown & Elliott, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Wallin, 2007; Zulueta, 2006; Holmes, 2001; Bowlby, 1988). There is growing evidence that a sense of attachment security can have healing effects from PTSD and can improve treatment (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

During this *finding safe sanctuary* element of yoga nidra, you will experience the healing support of a musical soundscape (Juslin & Sloboda, 2011). Developing a safe sanctuary provides a competency-generating platform for us to apprehend the emergence of presence, connectedness, and joy (Geller, 2017; Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Jinpa, 2015; Newberg & Waldman, 2014; Wilber, 2007) as we progress along the healing path.

Learning Integration

We encourage participants to follow-up their experience in today's session by completing the suggested "practice enhancements." The practice enhancements will help you process and integrate your insights and learning by drawing a mandala ... a visual symbol of your inner experience (Butchalter, 2012; Cornell, 2006; Kellogg, 2002) and through expressive writing (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016; Pennebaker, 2004; Myers, 2003; Lepore & Smyth, 2002).

The healing perspective surging underneath this session is in alignment with Carl Jung's conception that we are all on a path seeking wholeness. This self-organizing process seeking expression, Jung referred to as *individuation* (Jung, 1966). This unfolding dynamic posits that each of us is on a journey seeking the integration and healing of all of the "parts of ourselves" that have been alienated, repressed, or dissociated (Siegel, 2016; Sparks, 2016; Kalsched, 2013; Grof, 2012; Edinger, 1992). This session illuminates a potential path for this unfolding psycho-spiritual odyssey.

The session will conclude with a group discussion and allow time for questions, discussion and explore potential next steps.

AGENDA

- WELCOME AND CHECK-IN
- SETTING YOUR INTENTION
- INTRODUCTION TO YOGA NIDRA
- WELCOME TO THE iREST PRACTICE
 - Body Sensing
 - Breath Sensing
 - Welcoming Opposite Feelings and Emotions
 - Finding Safe Sanctuary
 - Welcoming Joy!
- REFLECTIONS ON THE SESSION

“When we acknowledge our inner and bodily wisdom we can then recognize our inherent capacity for healing.”

Christiane Northrup – American Integrative Physician

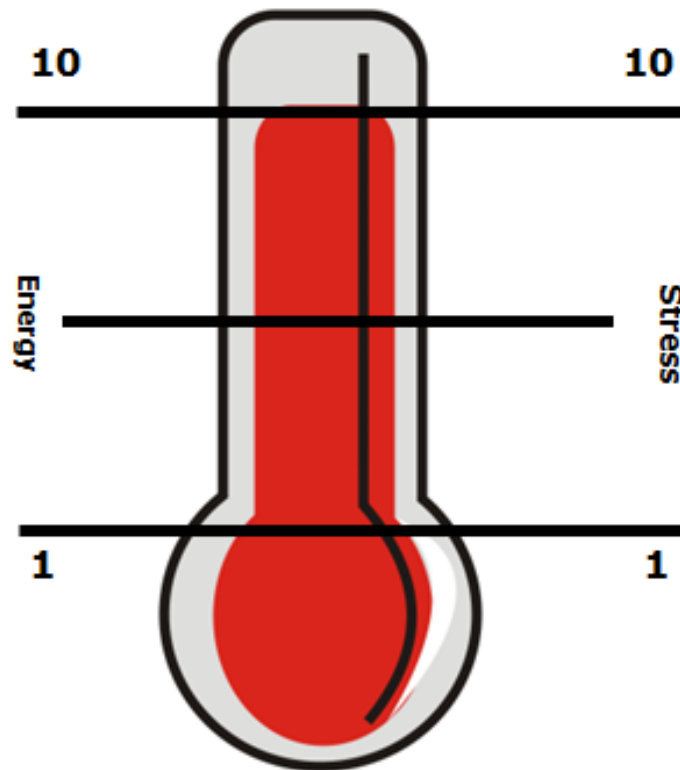
WELCOME AND CHECK-IN

“Neuroscience research shows that the only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our inner experience and learning to befriend what is going on inside ourselves.”

Bessel A. van der Kolk – Psychiatrist and researcher on post-traumatic stress

The Energy-Stress Thermometer

- 1) Notice how your energy and stress levels wax and wane during the course of any given day.
- 2) In groups of 2-3 ... introduce yourself and check-in on your energy and stress levels.
- 3) What are the competing factors that are challenging you to be present at this moment?



Competing Factors

INTRODUCTION TO YOGA NIDRA

“You possess within yourself an inner resource that’s designed to empower you to feel in control and at ease with every experience you have during your life. Your inner resource is a place of refuge within you. It provides you with inner support on every step of your healing.”

Richard C. Miller – founder of the iRest[®] program

Integrative Restoration (iRest[®]) has been developed by psychologist Richard C. Miller (2005, 2015). The process of iRest[®] is based upon the ancient yoga meditation practice of *yoga nidra*, which loosely translates as the “Sleep of the Yogi.” Recent research is demonstrating that iRest[®] is helping war veterans effectively manage symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and easing the symptoms of depression and anxiety (Fritts & Khusid, 2014). Yoga nidra has the potential capacity of fostering self-awareness and facilitate expanded states of consciousness leading to self-realization with dedicated practice over time.

Goals of the Practice

- Develop a stance of welcoming for all thoughts, feelings, and sensations and to distinguish between these qualities.
- Access your *inner resource* to help you feel increasingly in control in situations when you begin to feel out of control. This allows us to begin the process of tapping into our inner healing intelligence and what Fosha (2008) refers to as *transformance*. (In this program we are using “inner resource” and “safe sanctuary” interchangeably). The safe sanctuary has similar qualities to what Winnicott (1965) referred to as a “holding environment.”
- Discern the distinction between “thinking” and the “felt-sense of sensation” – developing our “sensate vocabulary” and fostering a sense of coherence.
- Enhance interoception through internally directed focus and attention.
- Harness internally directed perception as a method of systematic relaxation.
- Become comfortable and skillful with taking stock of your body from the inside out.
- Enhance a felt-sense of spaciousness (versus dissociation), connectedness, and joy.

In the iRest[®] program for healing there are ten components or protocols that comprise the practice. Each of these protocols can be practiced individually or in combination – they all synergistically provide a practice of healing and personal growth that you can utilize throughout your life. Today we will experience the following four iRest[®] practices:

1. Body Sensing
2. Breath Sensing
3. Welcoming Opposite Feelings and Emotions
4. Finding Safe Sanctuary
5. Welcoming Joy!

THE TEN TOOLS OF YOGA NIDRA (iREST)

1. Initial Relaxation
2. Setting of Intention for this Practice
3. Affirming Your Heartfelt Desire
4. Finding an Inner Resource (“Finding Safe Sanctuary”)
5. Body Sensing
6. Breath Sensing
7. Opposites – Feelings, Emotions, Beliefs
8. Welcoming Joy!
9. Witnessing – Observe Yourself
10. Integration

SOUNDSCAPE: *Quietude* by John Kater & Carlos Nakai

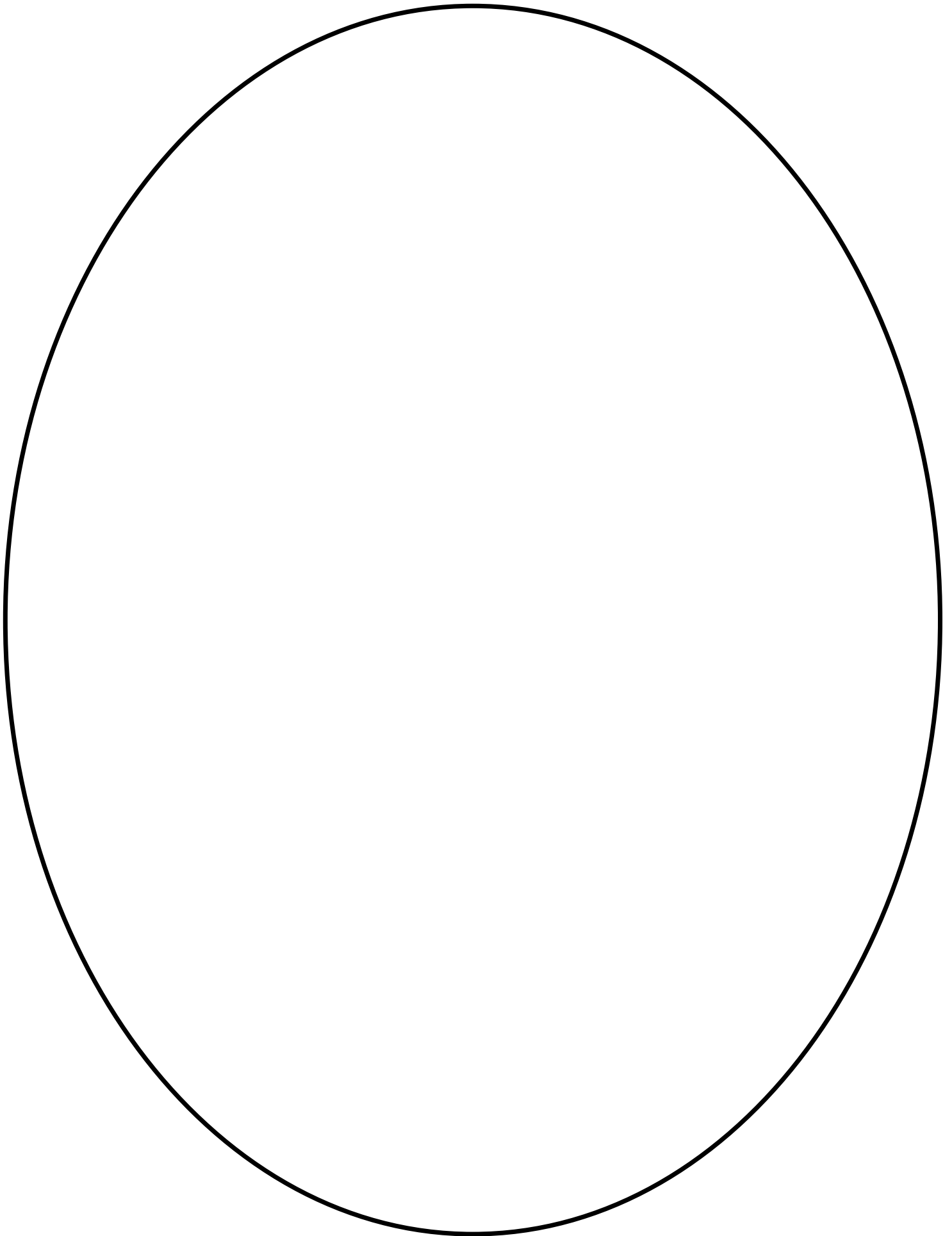
Practice Enhancements

Learning Integration

It has often been said that what one does immediately following a learning event is just as important as what one learns during the program.

The following “practice enhancements” ... creating a mandala and the expressive writing exercise provides an opportunity for you to reflect further and integrate your emergent learning.

Over the next few days pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, body sensations and dreams ... all are messengers reminding you of where you are *now* and where you are evolving on this journey of your life ...



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“Friends, colleagues, and family members often want you for what you are ... not for what you are becoming.”

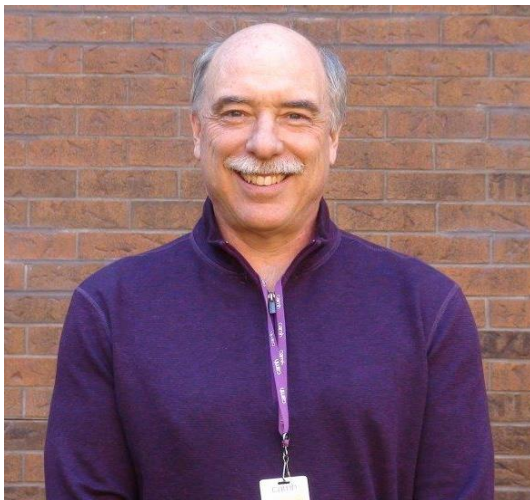
Charles Seashore – Organizational Consultant, National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute

FACILITATOR PROFILES



Rachael Frankford, MSW, RSW is a clinical social worker whose psychotherapy practice integrates traditional talk therapy with neurofeedback and mindfulness skills. Prior to committing to a full time private practice in 2017, she worked for 15 years at St. Michael’s Hospital, specializing in group based psychotherapy for a diverse clinical population in the Department of Psychiatry. As a skilled group therapist and mindfulness facilitator, Rachael developed mindfulness based groups adapted for depression, anxiety and trauma. She has a particular interest in somatic approaches to mental health and has trained in Sensorimotor Psychotherapy and the Othmer method of EEG Neurofeedback.

Rachael believes that a better understanding of the brain for both clinicians and patients can help improve mental health outcomes and reduce stigma for those suffering from mental illness. She developed the MAST (Mindful Awareness Stabilization Training) program and offers training for clinicians and front line workers to integrate mindfulness strategies into their work with clients and for self-care. **Contact: frankford.rachael@gmail.com**



Steven Hughes, M.Ed., is an Education Specialist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. Steven has worked in the mental health community and psychiatric hospital system facilitating educational programs for over 30 years. As a life-long learner Steven has interests in delivering programs pertaining to the creation of psychologically safe work environments that are characterized by optimal individual and team learning, resilience and well-being. Steven has been a certified yoga teacher since 1985 specializing in yin yoga and yoga nidra. Steven integrates his interests that include transformative learning, positive psychology, dialogue methods, contemplative neuroscience, mindfulness, holotropic breathwork, and wellness-based

modalities that assist individuals to cultivate self-awareness and unlock their full potential. All of his programs support learners to gently explore the edges of their personal growth boundaries and to experience new realms of self-discovery.

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