

**Yoga Nidra, Education And Students**  
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**Abstract**

Attention is responsible for bringing only important information to our consciousness and protecting consciousness from other information until the important one is processed. Attention is the key aspect of learning. It's a provider for new knowledge from the environment to our permanent memory. Without attention, we are simply not able to learn. Long-Term Memory is a permanent storage and it can hold the information for years and even decades. As information gets into long-term memory, we can say that we learnt it; at least for some period of time. Yoga nidra is not only an effective way to release stress and induce deep physiological rest and relaxation. Yoga nidra is a method which has been adopted by many pioneering educators as a means of improving conscious recall and thereby increasing memory function and learning capacity. After yoga nidra practice, there was improvement in accuracy implying a probable direct or indirect effect on middle-temporal cortex and hippocampus, increased spatial learning in memory. Slow wave sleep is essential for enhanced prefrontal cortex activity. Working memory showed significant improvement with yoga nidra practice. Therefore, yoga nidra is the ideal antidote; it preserves and enhances his natural abilities and develops the child's creative faculties in the most effortless and spontaneous way that can help in the development of their academic performances.

**Key words: Yoga Nidra, Learning, Working Memory, Students**

**Introduction**

Yoga nidra is not only an effective way to release stress and induce deep physiological rest and relaxation. Experiences are now revealing that it is an extremely efficient means of increasing learning capacity as well.<sup>[1]</sup> Yoga nidra promises to revolutionize teaching procedures in the decades ahead, enabling students of all ages to assimilate knowledge spontaneously, without effort.<sup>[1]</sup>

Some students want to learn, but their conscious mind is either weak or unreceptive. Through yoga nidra, they can absorb knowledge through the subconscious mind. The learning capacity of the student who practices yoga nidra is remarkably improved; it can come as quite a

surprise to see students reading books and solving mathematical problems that would have been much too difficult for them before.<sup>[1]</sup>

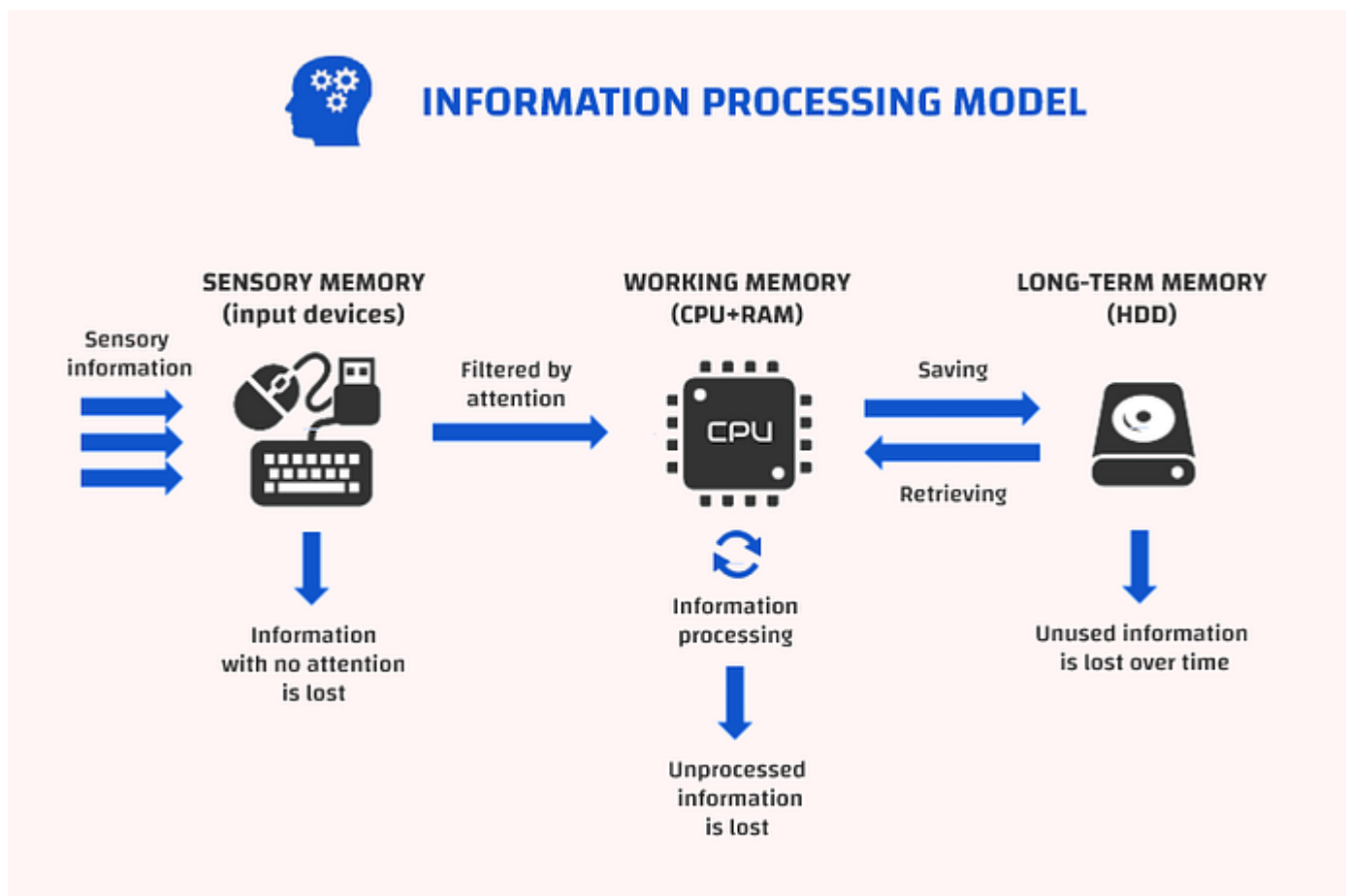
Learning is a two-step process:

1. Receiving visual and audio information from the environment.
2. Saving this information into our memory.

After that the information is always with us, any time we can get access to it and use it.<sup>[2]</sup> The receiving information can be present in visual (words, formulas, videos, faces, places, movements etc.) and audio (speech, melody, sound) formats.<sup>[2]</sup> But there is a bug (feature) of our brain — not all information we receive is stored in our memory.<sup>[2]</sup>

### Brain Like A Computer

Our brain and the process of memorization are quite difficult things. To explain these things to regular people like me, cognitive psychologists (and first among them was George Miller) came up with the **Information Processing Model** — a computer architecture analogy for representation of how our brain deals with receiving information and how to restore it.<sup>[2]</sup>



**Sensory Memory** is a temporary storage for the information received from our five senses: hearing, vision, touch, smell, and taste. The task of this stage is to store sensory information for a few moments (up to 5 seconds) until the value of that information is determined.

**Working Memory** or Short-Term Memory is a core of our brain machine. It's where our conscious thoughts live, it's where we make decisions, solve problems and come up with new ideas. Or in other words, its task is to process information. Working memory gets information from a few sources: Sensory Memory, Internal Organs, Background thoughts, and Long-Term Memory. And after processing that information it transfers the results into Long-Term Memory or sends a command to the body to perform some actions. Working memory is also a temporary storage — information is stored at this stage as long as it is processed (typically 7–15 seconds). For new information that we want to remember, the processing means some interaction with this information — understanding and rehearsing it, associating it with other familiar concepts. These operations help to decide whether to memorize the information and if so, get it ready for saving in Long-Term Memory.

**Long-Term Memory** is our memory in the conventional sense. It's a permanent storage and it can hold the information for years and even decades. As information gets into long-term memory, we can say that we learnt it. At least for some period of time. Attention is responsible for bringing only important information to our consciousness and protecting consciousness from other information until the important one is processed. Without this mechanism we wouldn't be able to concentrate long enough on any task to finish it.<sup>[2]</sup>

Imagine, you're sitting in a noisy cafe with your notebook working on an important project. There are a lot of different signals around you: people at the next table are talking, cars and pedestrians are passing behind the window, the door is opened and closed etc. But your attention allows you to ignore (filter) all these distractions. At this moment, all your thoughts on your project.

### **Attention And Learning**

From a learning perspective, the information that we want to learn has to pass Sensory and Working memories and then be stored in Long-Term Memory. Only the information that has reached Long-Term Memory matters. Only this information can be considered learned.<sup>[2]</sup>

As we considered above, without attention new information can't reach Working Memory or can't get enough computing time to be successfully processed. As a result such information can't reach Long-Term Memory.<sup>[2]</sup> In other words, the input information that didn't get attention cannot be learned. So the main conclusion about the importance of attention is extremely simple -No attention = No learning. As a student, the more your mind is daydreaming during a lecture, the more you're wasting your time. As a teacher, the more your students lose their attention, the worse you're doing your job.<sup>[2]</sup>

Attention is the key aspect of learning. It's a provider for new knowledge from the environment to our permanent memory. Without attention, we are simply not able to learn.<sup>[2]</sup> Our brain and the remembering process are difficult things. But thanks to schematic simplifications like Information Processing Model we can get a basic understanding of our brain organization, how it works, its features and limitations. As students, this knowledge may help us increase learning efficiency by developing good study habits. And as learning designers, to create more effective educational products.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Yogic system Of Education**

There are various processes through which knowledge can be implanted in the human brain. During the last few decades, many methods have been introduced into the educational system. The most common method, of course, is teaching in a classroom using rewards and punishments. The teacher gives a lecture and the student tries to understand it. If the student is intelligent, he gets a good grade, and if he is dull, he fails. This might be a system of teaching, but it is definitely not a system of education.

Real education is educating the behaviour of the mind and brain. Even the newer forms of teaching which have been introduced in the last few decades fall short of this goal. In most of them the learning process takes place at an intellectual level. In the yogic system, however, the process of imbibing knowledge is a spontaneous affair, which takes place at the deeper levels of the mind.

At every moment of our lives, right from birth, we are constantly receiving impressions. But these are not registered in the brain in the same form as when they went in; they are registered in the form of symbolic vibrations. Therefore, any real system of education must take the symbolic nature of the mind into account.

There is no subject which cannot be taught using symbolic methods. This form of education is especially well suited to the dull type of student. Intellectual concepts can be explained directly to an intelligent student, because he is capable of understanding them. But the dull child cannot be taught in this way, because his conscious brain, his intellect, is incapable of receiving the information directly. The knowledge has to be transmitted in symbolic form directly into his subconscious mind, and this is precisely the role of yoga nidra in education.

### **Increasing Memory Function**

Yoga nidra is a method which has been adopted by many pioneering educators as a means of improving conscious recall and thereby increasing memory function and learning capacity. <sup>[1]</sup>

Two factors are involved in the process of memory. The first is the brain's ability to absorb information and the second is its ability to recall the information later on. Yoga nidra works

on both of these levels by establishing a state of maximum receptivity in the subconscious mind, along with a simultaneous state of awareness.<sup>[1]</sup>

The possibility of assimilating knowledge while we are asleep and recalling it during the waking state, termed hypnopedy, depends on the capacity of the mind to passively absorb knowledge by suggestion when it is in a state of relaxation. This is not inexplicable if we can accept that at all times, even during sleep, there remains a dimension of consciousness which is alert and aware. Like a passive witness, it makes a continual recording of all the events and perceptions of our daily lives as they occur, even those of which we are not consciously aware. For example, unknown to us, the auditory faculty is making a continual recording of every sound that reaches it. These impressions are stored in the vast memory banks of our grey matter computer, the cerebral cortex. Here they are destined to remain latent and inaccessible, unless we can find a way to recall them. The method of recalling these dormant records of earlier experiences into consciousness is to present an appropriate stimulus during the ordinary waking states. For example, an adult who hears a particular melody may suddenly be flooded with long forgotten memories from early childhood.

In the same way, the information recorded by the subconscious mind during yoga nidra can also be accessed and retrieved, given the appropriate stimulus. In this case, the stimulus takes the form of the replaying or rereading during the waking state of the same material that was assimilated during sleep.

### **Yoga Nidra Integrates The Hemispheres**

Researchers propose that yoga nidra is an appropriate state in which to learn something new because it employs both hemispheres of the brain in the task: the logical, conscious left and the non-logical, subconscious right. In the traditional classroom, students are encouraged to pay attention (a left hemisphere function), but while trying to absorb what the instructor is saying, their subconscious mind (right hemisphere) is continually recording signals that have nothing to do with the learning task at hand. However, in yoga nidra, the signals which are being received by the subconscious are reorganized in such a way that the whole mind is receptive to them. Thus, far more of the total brain is focused effortlessly on learning.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **Applications Of Effortless Learning**

Modern educational methods which make use of this state are producing spectacular results. Educational innovations such as Dr Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychologist are utilizing yoga nidra to create an atmosphere in which knowledge is gained without effort and can then be reawakened without blockages.<sup>[3]</sup> Recognizing that the state of active and relaxed awareness in students awakens the desire to learn, improves memory and reduces inhibitions,

Lozanov has devised a teaching procedure which altogether transforms the traditional classroom atmosphere. Students are comfortably installed in armchairs and the teacher gradually creates a spontaneous attitude of relaxed awareness through the medium of games, sketches, chants, relaxation, breathing practices and music in a carefully alternated way. As the class proceeds, the students effortlessly assimilate an enormous amount of specific knowledge which, under conventional classroom conditions, would surely precipitate strain, tiredness and loss of concentration.

Using this technique, Lozanov has been able to teach a foreign language in 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the time required by conventional methods. His research procedures indicate that the phenomena of exceptional recall power and even photographic memory (termed hypermnnesia) can be systematically developed under the twin condition of deep relaxation and spontaneous awareness which characterize the yoga nidra state. EEG studies of the brainwave patterns of students during these particular sessions also confirm that the state of passive awareness which is generated is a combination of these two factors. This is the key to the success of the technique.

Psychologists at Florida University (USA) have clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of this form of linguistic education. Over a five-day period they played recordings of Russian nouns, linked with their English counterparts, to twenty sleeping students, none of whom had prior knowledge of Russian. EEG monitoring of brain activity ensured that the normal waking awareness had been withdrawn. The average retention rate was 13%, while the highest was 30%, a definite indication that subconscious learning does occur. Furthermore, average retention scores rose from 10% on the first three nights to 17% on the last two nights, showing that sleep-learning improves with time.

In Canada, where civil servants are required to speak both English and French, the Public Service has adopted Lozanov's yoga nidra technique with remarkable results. Not only is the learning of a foreign language five times more effective, but according to Dr Gabriele Racle, who heads the program: "The approach benefits the whole person. Not only do this psychosomatic problems often disappear (headaches, stomach cramps, anxiety), but we see his personality develop; he becomes more self-assured, more creative, and expresses himself more easily."<sup>[4]</sup>

Schoolteachers in several countries are using yoga nidra to augment the capacities of receptivity and attention, and to awaken the joy of learning in their young students. They report that techniques such as rotation of consciousness and visualization heighten the

capacity for relaxation and interest among schoolchildren.<sup>[5]</sup> Fatigue and boredom evaporate in the new, relaxed atmosphere, which encourages the development within each child of a solid internal focus for self-discipline and inner discovery. The children absorb a method of spontaneous relaxation which they can utilize whenever they feel fatigued or depressed.

### **Psychic Development In Children**

Psychic receptivity and extrasensory perception (ESP) are found to increase with the level of relaxation.<sup>[6]</sup> Therefore, yoga nidra is perhaps the most effective of all the yogic technique in precipitating the experience of the psychic and intuitive dimensions lying beyond the barriers of sensory consciousness. The child's capacity to 'see' the mental screen without strain of difficulty is awesome. Many young children, when left to their own devices, have the ability to dwell simultaneously in the objective adult realm of awareness and in an inner dimension of experience in which imaginary friends and guides advise them through an extraordinary pageant of play events each day. What is more, they can switch over from this private inner dimension to the down to earth adult reality effortlessly whenever demanded upon by parents or teachers.

According to yogi psychophysiology, this is possible because ajna chakra, the command centre or seat of intuition, contacted at the mid-eyebrow point, is still naturally functional in young children. This internally directed 'third eye', which bestows ready access to the higher states of conscious awareness, corresponds to the pineal gland, situated at the top of the spinal cord in the midline of the brain.<sup>[7]</sup>

Up to the 8<sup>th</sup> year, this gland remains large and functional, exerting a controlling influence over the secretory behaviour of the pituitary gland. However, this control is gradually relinquished as the process of puberty occurs. The pituitary gland then assumes an autonomous role as the master gland of the entire endocrine system, activating the reproductive glands and initiating the onset of mature sexual behaviour.

With the onset of adult life the experience of the child's higher dimensions of awareness becomes only a dim memory. The childhood capacity to visualize and fantasize at will is virtually lost in adult life today, depriving modern man of the gifts of a creative personality, leaving him socially isolated, denying him the comfort of emotional self-expression and making him highly susceptible to major psychosomatic diseases as a result.

Karuna Datta et. al. said that yoga nidra practice showed improvement in reaction time with no deterioration in accuracy of all cognitive battery tests. This implies an increase in processing speed. After yoga nidra practice, there was improvement in accuracy implying a probable direct or indirect effect on middle-temporal cortex and hippocampus, increased

spatial learning in memory. Slow wave sleep is essential for enhanced prefrontal cortex activity. Working memory showed significant improvement with yoga nidra practice<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Yoga nidra has a vital role to play in ensuring the future psychological health and wellbeing of children who are growing up in the urban technological culture. Its action images of nature and animal come as a breath of fresh air to city children deprived of a green landscape and countryside, living in the harsh concrete reality of the inner city.

Furthermore, the present audio-visual era, in which the child grows up surrounded by radio, television, computers, mobile phones, comic books and cinema screens, causes a paradoxical degeneration of his own self-generated imaginative functions. This is due to the damping influence of innumerable images coming from the external environment, which stereotype the child's own eidetic capacities, impeding the natural flow and development of internal awareness and intuition knowledge. However, yoga nidra is the ideal antidote; it preserves and enhances his natural abilities and develops the child's creative faculties in the most effortless and spontaneous way.

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