

The Nervous System

Restorative Yoga, Sensit Somatics and Embodied Meditation

with Maja Zilih

- *Introduction to Sensit Yoga Somatics*
- *The Nervous System Divisions*



Sensit Yoga™
Somatics





Welcome to the Sensit Yoga Somatic – Nervous System course!

In this course you will get to know your nervous system FROM WITHIN.

Learning ABOUT the nervous system on the cognitive/theoretical level is the first step to somatization.

However, it is the direct embodied experiencing that gives rise to clarity and the type of knowledge that facilitates more efficient nervous system regulation.

As you will see, differentiation, unification and exploration of different branches of the nervous system is explored in the context of 3 practices: Somatic movement, Restorative Asana, and Embodied Meditation (including Yoga Nidra)

This because, over the years of personal practice, I have found that it is these 3 practices, more than any other practice I have come across, have a direct impact on the tone of our nervous system, and enable us a deeper access to its pathways.

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Sensit Methodology: Quality of touch in Sensit Yoga Somatics

The touch and self-touch is characterised by the qualities of **embodied presence**, awareness, sensitivity and receptivity.

The hand that is touching certain area of the body is always primarily focused on listening, receiving and inviting, rather than imposing, correcting or manipulating.

Enjoy this exploration inspired by Body-Mind Centering: Place your hand on your abdomen. Let the hand take the shape of the belly, as if it is “receiving” it. Feel the surface of your hand that is touching the belly. Feel the surface of your hand BEING TOUCHED by your belly. In the area of connection, feel the gathering of cells, fluids and energy. Notice the difference in sensations there, from an area that is NOT being touched. Then you can repeat the process of conscious touch with a person, animal, tree, soil, water or other.

Beneath this methodology is a deep-seated belief that **each body has the capacity to find its own way to health and balance**. Conscious touch of another person is simply helping the body’s spaces and tissues **awaken to their existence**, and then to their **knowledge of the right course of action**.

When touching another person, there is **a welcoming** of contact. Remember the BMC meditation – the uterine wall of the mother is **welcoming** the floating embryo. Upon connecting to the uterine wall, the cells that make up the embryo are migrating to the place of connection.

We relax when we feel support. When touching another person, we often **communicate support**: The way we hold someone’s arm for example, can communicate that we are supporting them. This is a **direct communication between the bodies**, and much more efficient in helping them relax, than verbally *telling* them to relax. Verbal can be helpful, but it may also take them into their thinking mind, wondering if they are doing something wrong, and why they cannot relax.

In connection with the other, we are staying in OUR own body, sensing our hands and softly attentive to whatever arises inside us.

We touch different body systems with a different quality of touch. Organ touch will differ from skin or muscle or glandular touch. If we are touching someone’s organ, periodically sensing our own organ helps us to resonate each other. Attunement happens and consciousness of the organ gets transmitted. Our own embodiment makes the difference.



Mind of the Nervous System

How do we embody **the mind of the nervous system**?

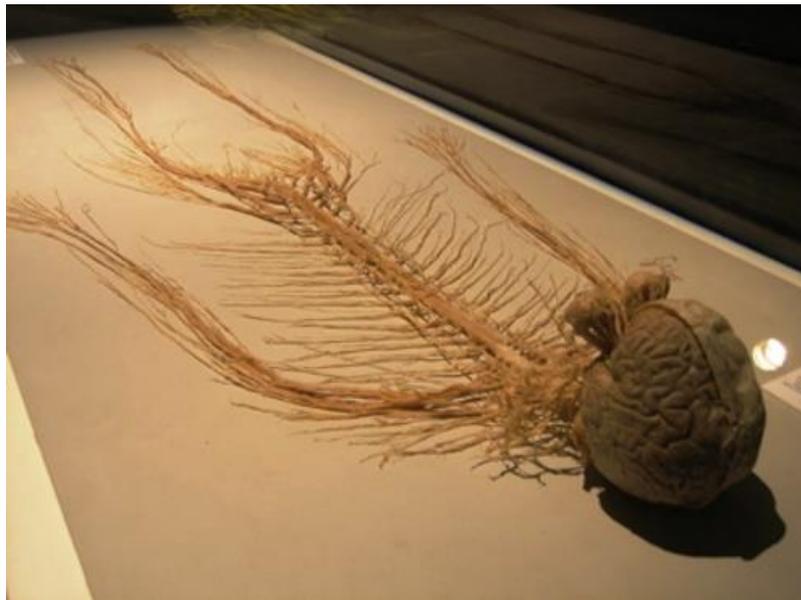
Practice: Come into a comfortable seat or lie down on the ground and close your eyes. Feel the places in your body that are in contact with the ground, and become a little heavier in those places. Take one longer exhale, 1 fuller inhale, and then breathe naturally.



Begin to feel the **tone of your nervous system**. Can you sense what your nervous system is like at this moment in time? There may be certain indication, such as heart beat pace, the depth of your breath, how busy your mind is. However, do not stay in any one place too long. Rather, try to have a sense of the **entire** nervous system, namely, of your **overall tone**. Notice that the overall tone can be felt throughout your entire body. There may be words to describe it, or perhaps it is just a sensation. Fascia, our all-pervasive and all-encompassing connective tissue resonates with the tone of the nervous system all throughout our body. Stay in this space of awareness, noticing if there are any changes happening in the nervous system tone.

Now, can you also acknowledge that you/awareness/consciousness is observing the nervous system? How does the nervous system respond to being observed?

Nervous system structure and function



The nervous system regulates and controls the functioning of all the organs, glands and muscles of the human body, as well as the harmonious cooperation between them. It is also the seat of mental functions and, through the sensory organs it contributes to our perception of the environment.

The nervous system is comprised of two primary cell types: neurons and glial cells. These cells communicate with each other to perform important tasks in the nervous system. The glial cells support and nourish neurons structurally and maintain their long-term neuronal integrity, and neurons regulate glial cell behaviour. In this support of neurons, glial cells have become highly specialized. Glial cells, which can be divided into several types, have various important functions, such as providing structural support, growth support, and insulation around the axon.¹

Neurons have specialized projections called axons that enable neurons to transmit electrical and chemical signals to other cells. They receive these signals via dendrites - rootlike extensions. Nerves' function is to receive the stimuli from sense organs and transfer them to the executive organs, i.e. the **muscles** and the **glands**. Information on these stimuli is collected through the receptors and transferred to the Central Nervous System - CNS.

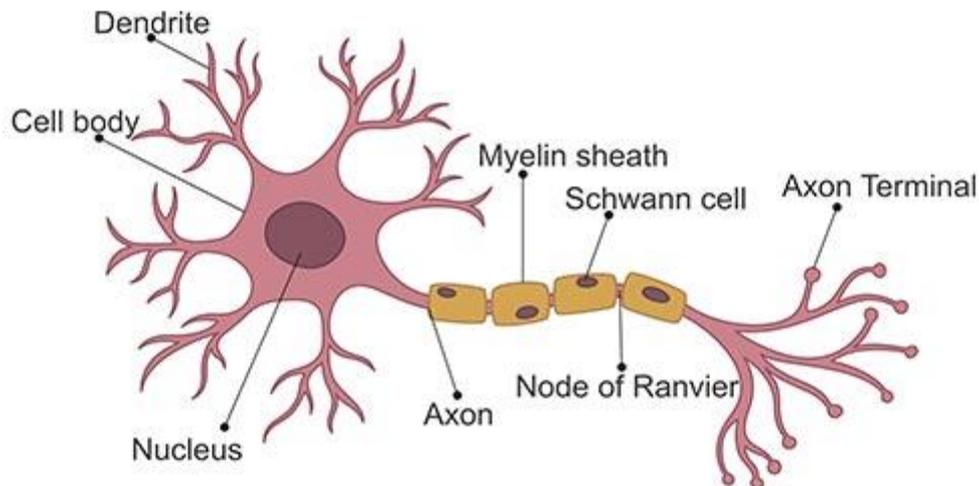
Myelin is a lipid-rich (fatty) substance that surrounds nerve cell axons to insulate them and increase the rate at which electrical impulses (called action potentials) are passed along the axon². Majority of

¹ <https://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/myelin-a-specialized-membrane-for-cell-communication-14367205/>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myelin>



the **neurons** are **myelinated** because myelination facilitates fast conduction speeds. A **neuron** with unmyelinated axon has a comparatively lower speed of conduction of the nerve signals.³



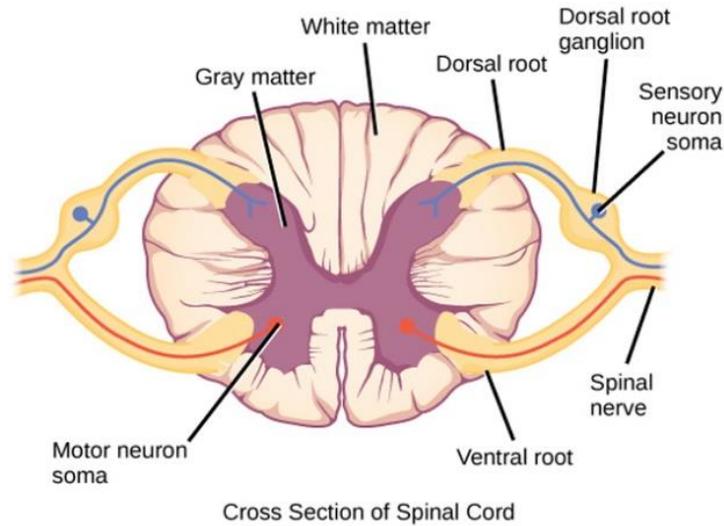
Important suggestion: When embodying the nerves, instead of visualising wires, see and feel the nerves the way they really are – tubes that are adaptive and responsive to motion and compression, elastic, bending and gliding. Notice the change in quality of movement when you internalize the image of your nerves this way.

The Nervous System can be divided into the **Central Nervous System (CNS)** consisting of **the brain** and the **spinal cord**, and the **Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)**, consisting of all the other nerves in the body.

Spinal cord is a long, thin tubular bundle of nerve cells protruding from the brain into the spine. It is a basic unit of the Central Nervous System. It is located in the **spinal canal**, which is an internal spinal tube and its length is from the occipital bone to between the 1st and 2nd lumbar vertebrae.

The **spinal nerves within the vertebral tube** are divided into two branches, called **anterior and posterior** roots. The sensory nervous system connects to the cord with the posterior roots, while the motoric nervous system is connected to the anterior roots. The spinal cord consists of areas of white and grey matter, which are arranged in an opposite way to the brain.

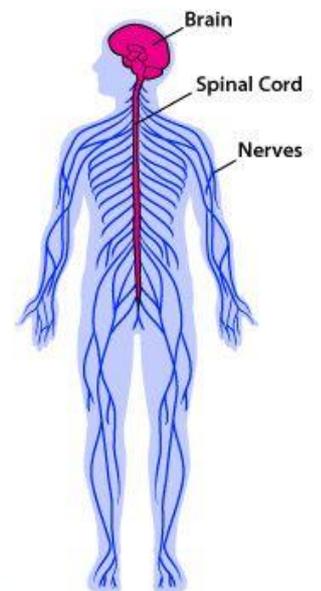
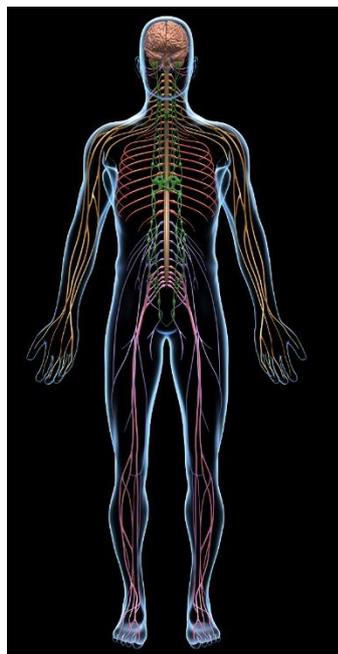
³ <https://www.easybiologyclass.com/difference-between-myelinated-and-unmyelinated-neurons/#:~:text=Majority%20of%20the%20neurons%20in,conduction%20of%20the%20nerve%20signals.>



Grey **matter** is distinguished from **white matter** in that it contains numerous cell bodies and relatively few myelinated axons, while **white matter** contains relatively few cell bodies and is composed chiefly of long-range myelinated axons. The colour difference arises mainly from the whiteness of myelin.⁴

Continuity and divisions

Our nervous system is **one continuous whole**. However, to better understand its functioning, various aspects have been identified and their roles are examined. We will explore the 3 divisions of the nervous system: central-peripheral, somatic-autonomic and sensory-motor divisions. Withing the autonomic system we will explore the division sympathetic, parasympathetic and enteric.



■ Central Nervous System (CNS)
■ Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey_matter#:~:text=Grey%20matter%20is%20distinguished%20from,from%20the%20whiteness%20of%20myelin.



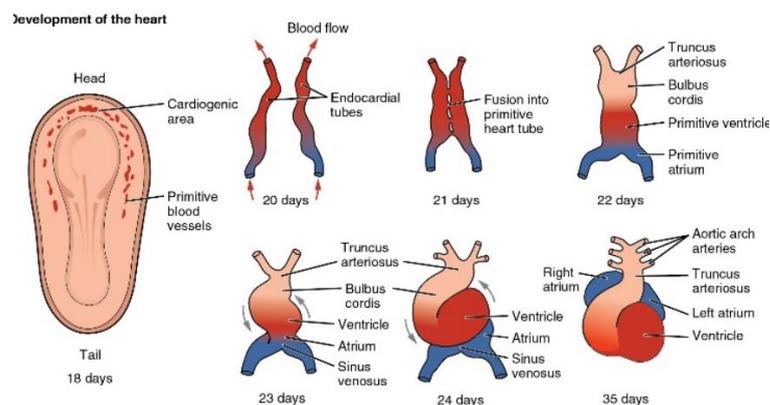
But first, let's see how the human nervous system comes into being.

Why do we explore embryology?

I try to learn as much as I can from embryology because

1. Embryology is the story of how we came to be. It is the most fascinating stage of our history, and our history is always present within us. It keeps informing us, and thus it is forming us. We never just ARE. We are always in a process, always BECOMING. Never constant, always changing, evolving, even though at a much different rate and speed from when we were an embryo.
2. It is very powerful stage of existence. To remember it is to remember our own self-creation, ability to sustain ourselves, to provide self-nourishment and self-protection.
3. It is easier for me to feel, access and approach a certain organ, muscle or bone, when **I know how this structure came into being**. What inner movement shaped the structure and for what purpose (function)? Exploring **movement, structure** and **function** expands our vision of the process of self-creation, as well as the therapeutic aspect of the movement.

For example, embryologically, the heart develops as a spiral. Therefore, gentle, spiralling motions of the heart could replicate the way that the heart *naturally came into being*. The structure of any organ gets created through a **movement pattern**. The structure, or design is such in order to serve the **optimum functioning** of this organ. In our exploration, we can evoke a memory of the movement pattern that set the foundation for the heart's optimum functioning. (Keep in mind that rotation, or a twist, does not equal spiral. Rotation moves only in transverse plane. Spiral or a helix moves in more than one plane at the same time.)



4. Whatever your practice is – yoga, martial arts, manual therapy, feeling inquiry, mindfulness meditation etc - knowing embryology will give you a different knowledge of the self and a profound understanding of the body-mind, that comes as a new home-ground upon which you can base the existing practices.



The Embryonic Development of the Nervous System

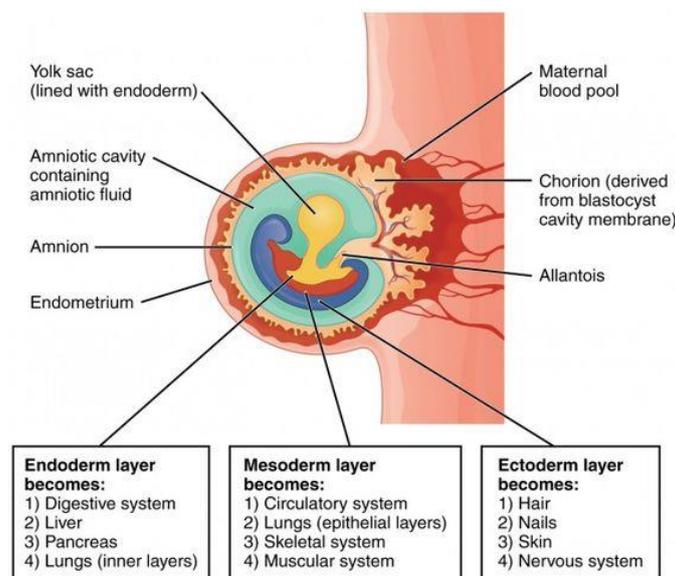
Embodiment of our Embryo-self is a journey of remembering the most powerful stage of our lives, where WE created our own nourishment and our own protection. It can be very empowering for us to remember this process of self-generation and self-assembly, and of having the ability to provide for ourselves all the internal and external support we need to grow and to thrive.⁵

Front, back and middle bodies

Front body – Endoderm - Yolk Sac (that will produce a gut tube from mouth to anus) – nourishment - internal sea of Energy/Prana/Chi. From Endoderm we develop digestive system, thymus gland, lungs and prostate

Back body – Ectoderm - Amniotic cavity (that will produce an amniotic sac surrounding us – protection - external sea energy/Prana/Chi. From Ectoderm we develop our and nervous system, skin, hair, nails, and other.

Middle body – Mesoderm – starts to develop at the site of the future perineal body and grows both around us (extraembryonic mesoderm) and in the middle of us - between the front and back bodies (intraembryonic mesoderm)/ From Mesoderm, all the connective tissue will form, including bone, muscle, fascia, cartilage, blood, blood vessels, as well as heart, organs of the urogenital organs, and lymph.



⁵ For a more complete journey of embodied embryology, I recommend a DVD by B.B Cohen: The Origins of Movement: <https://www.bodymindcentering.com/product/the-origins-of-movement/>



Central and Peripheral

The **central nervous system** consists of the **brain and spinal cord** nerves. All the other nerves belong to the **Peripheral nervous system**.

Embodiment practice:

Explore the brain as you initiate movement from its different areas.

Place a thick round bolster in front of you and come to the quadruped position, with your forearms and knees on the floor. Place the top of the head on the bolster and explore the feeling of the central axis by exerting gentle pushes and rolls into the bolster.

If you work with a partner, let them hold your head as you move your head and spine in quadruped position.

Use asanas or other spontaneous movements to explore the distinction between the central and the peripheral NS: Movement with awareness of the center – brain and spinal cord up to the L1-L2. If inaccessible as a sensation, focus on moving the head and spine. Then gradually go deeper inwards. Continuously prioritize the central axis. Brain and spinal cord are characterized by fluidity. Nourishing cerebro-spinal fluid (CSF) is enveloping the whole brain and cord.

After journeying through this central axis, we can start to expand into the peripheral system, growing the nerves down the back and from center into each arm and each leg separately, then two arms together, two legs together.

Then return from periphery to center and explore going back and forth

Autonomic and Somatic

The **somatic nervous system** (SoNS) is the part of the peripheral nervous system associated with the **voluntary** control of body movements through the skeletal muscles and mediation of involuntary reflex arcs.

The **autonomic nervous system** (ANS) is the part of the peripheral nervous system that controls visceral functions. Our organs constantly communicate with the brain. Conventionally it is said that it occurs below the level of consciousness. Examples of the processes controlled by the autonomic are heart rate, digestion, respiratory rate, perspiration (sweating), salivation, sexual arousal etc. However, recognizing the consciousness in the entire body and all of its cells, we may view these involuntary actions also as conscious, but operating on a different level of consciousness.

Embodiment practice: Somatic – Voluntary action : Contemplate on how when you experience a stimulus such as an itch in your left forearm, the signal travels from there through the **sensory nerves** into the spinal column where the spinal cord is located. It enters the spinal cord (inside the spine) from the **posterior side**. From there it travels to the brain, where the information is processed and the decision is made on what to do about the itch. The command will come from the brain to the spinal cord and through its **anterior roots** it will go into the **motor nerves**. The motor nerves go all the way to the muscles of the hand that will scratch the area. The whole process is considered voluntary. (Though it can only be more, or less conscious depending on the state of mind one is in – how focused the person is on the stimuli, or preoccupied with something else)

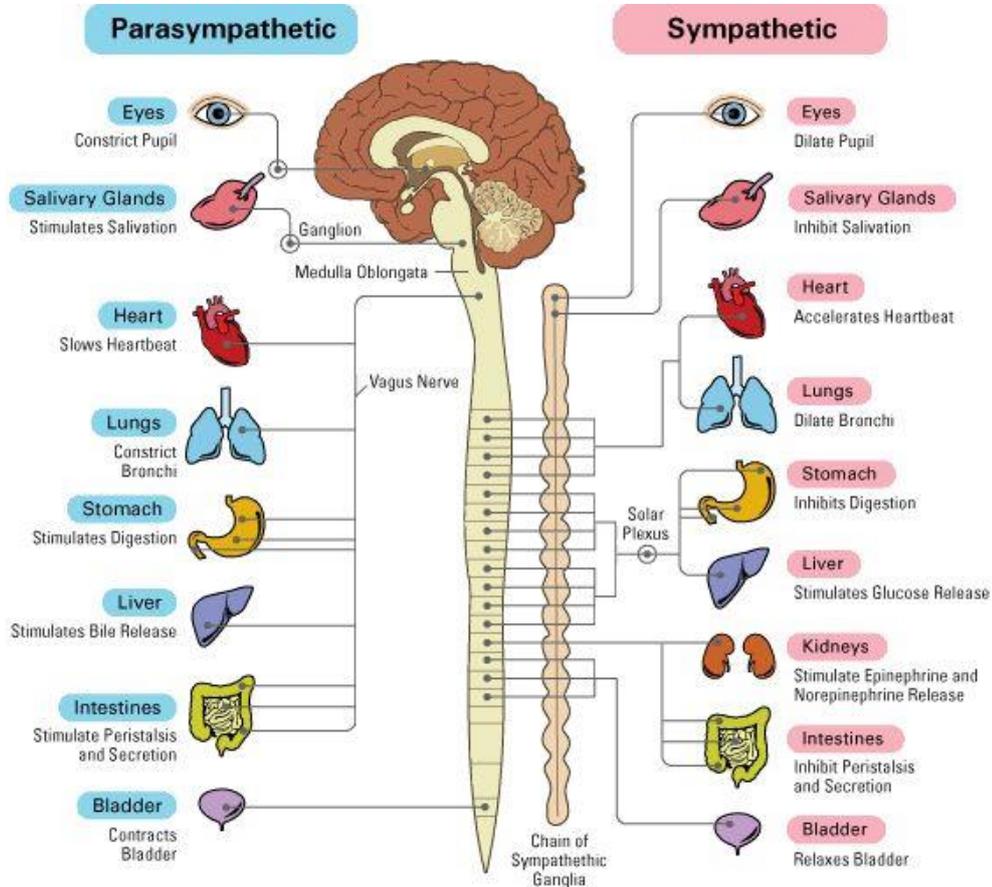
Body-Mind Centering description of Autonomic and Somatic Nervous System

The Autonomous Nervous system innervates organs, glands and vessels. It is responsible for balancing the internal movement within the body. The Somatic Nervous System innervates the skeletal muscles and is responsible for balancing the external motion – movement of the body in space. In our embryonic development but also in our



evolutionary development as a species, autonomic system develops earlier on, and it contributes to the maintenance of internal homeostasis. Therefore, it sets the foundation for the somatic system. The somatic system transports the expression of the autonomous system from inside into the outer world.

Sympathetic, Parasympathetic and Enteric, are branches of the *autonomic* nervous system



Schema Explaining How Parasympathetic and Sympathetic Nervous Systems Regulate Functioning Organs

The **sympathetic nervous system** activates the body for mobilization. It increases the pulse of the heart, expands the bronchi, stimulates the arteries and more. It is often mistakenly described as prevalent only in situations of great fear where the body is preparing for fight flight or freeze. But this is only when one is stressed or overwhelmed. Then the sympathetic system carries the alarm signal across the body. It informs the whole body that there is a state of survival and that increased alertness is required. But the sympathetic system is continuously active, just like the parasympathetic. They complement each other. When sympathetic system is in balance, our experience is an awake, steady awareness. So emotionally it can convey a sense of alert but also a sense of awakening, pure awareness of the environment.

The **parasympathetic nervous system** is dominant in relaxation (rest and digest) state. It calms the heart, shrinks the bronchi, helps the production of digestive juices, produces hormones for bonding, intimacy etc. Body-Mind Centering description: The parasympathetic system provides our **basic nervous tone** - a background for communication between and the integration of various aspects of the nervous system. It is the recording of nervous tone in a specific area and throughout the body. Emotionally it transmits a sense of ourselves and informs us of totality without separating specific parts.



Owing to their location, the parasympathetic system is commonly referred to as having "craniosacral outflow", which stands in contrast to the sympathetic nervous system, which is said to have "thoracolumbar outflow".

The **enteric nervous system** consists of neurons that govern the function of the [gastrointestinal tract](#). The neurons of the enteric nervous system control the motor functions of the system, in addition to the secretion of gastrointestinal enzymes. The enteric nervous system is capable of operating independently of the brain and spinal cord,^[6] but does rely on innervation from the autonomic nervous system

Embodiment practices:

Tracing the sympathetic **nerves** from the thoracic and upper lumbar spine to the organs. Tracing the parasympathetic nerves from the brain (skull) and sacral bone to the organs.

Hands-on in couples, or a warm pad by oneself, on the sacrum and occipital bone

Observing reactions to thoughts that cause stress

Meditation

Restorative yoga

Exploration below (a combination of Body-Mind Centering and Tantric approach)

Lie down and initially feel the "tone" of your nervous system. Gradually release your tissues by first matching your physiological tone and then going "under" it. Relax your body and surrender to the Earth. Feel the totality of your being, your whole body, the totality of your breath. When you feel a wholeness of your breathing and restfulness, your **parasympathetic nerves** are actively engaged. Immerse yourself in relaxation like a whale that leaves the waves on the surface and sinks into the depths of the ocean – this is going "under the tone". – Body-Mind Centering

The experience of the parasympathetic system is that of the black foundation or background. In Tantra Yoga it is represented by the deities Kali or Siva. The feeling is that of being in a safe dark place that nourishes and revitalizes all our cells. Darkness is pleasant, comforting, protective like the darkness of the mother's womb. Or darkness of the nourishing fertile soil of the Earth. The seed planted on the dark soil of the Earth is in the form of pure potentiality as expressed in the Tantric approach.

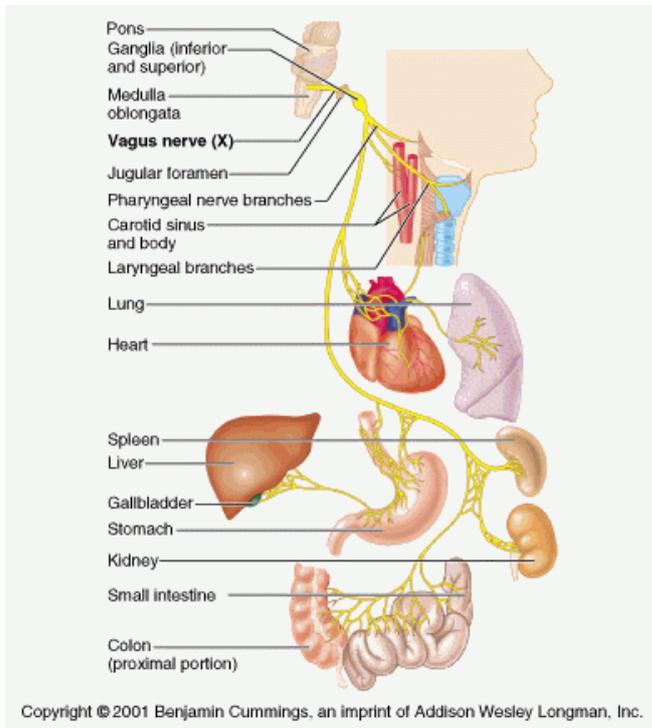
"As you are lying there, notice if fine channels of internal movement begin to emerge. These channels are the expression of your **sympathetic nerves**. Allow your attention to shift between the wholeness of the ground of your parasympathetic nerves and the channels of flow occurring through your sympathetic nerves.

When you are ready, allow your body to follow the internal channels of flow into movement through space activating the **somatic nerves**. As you move through space, bring more power into your movement by engaging the parasympathetic ground. Can you differentiate the wholeness and power of the parasympathetic ground, from the sympathetic inner channels of flow from the somatically active engagement of your muscles?" – Body-Mind centering, notes from the Nervous System course.



The vagus nerve

The vagus nerve is the 10 cranial nerve and the so called “wondering” nerve, or “nerve of compassion”. It is the largest, and one of the most powerful parasympathetic nerves in our body, which innervates our face, throat and all of the organs.



Activation or stimulation of the vagus nerve increases the feeling of calmness, restores balance, increases vitality, reduces inflammation, reduces depression and stress, calms the heart, and boosts immune function.

Regular stimulation of Vagus nerve is recommended to relieve stress and tension, to deal with panic attacks and to relieve pain and inflammation.

The Polyvagal Theory, developed by **Stephen Porges**, tries to explain the connection between the vagus nerve, past trauma, attachment, and emotional regulation.

It explains that the autonomic nervous system consists of 3 neural circuits or branches:

1. Ventral Vagal – when prevalent, we feel comfortable, relaxed and awake, playful, at ease with ourselves and the environment, in mood for socialisation or intimacy. In yoga this state is usually called *sattva*. We are mobilized, without fear.
2. Spinal Sympathetic – when prevailing, we feel fear

accompanied with a surge of energy, the well-known fight or flight mode. In yoga philosophy this state is called *rajas*. We are mobilized, with fear.

3. Dorsal Vagal – when prevailing, we feel sluggish, depressed and in the so-called freeze mode. In yoga philosophy this state is called *tamas*. We are immobilized, with fear.

Ideally, the 3 circuits are working in balance, bringing about the dynamic homeostasis, and allowing us to be responsive and to be able to shift from one state to the other, with awareness and without becoming overwhelmed or spending too much time in the extremes.

Location: The two divisions of the vagus (ventral and dorsal) each go to the heart, the lungs and the airways. In addition the Ventral Vagus branch extends to the throat (larynx and pharynx) and it relates to the movement of the face. The Dorsal Vagus, in addition to heart and lungs, extends to digestive organs (except for the descending colon)

These 3 branches of our nervous system have developed phylogenically sequentially, indicating the survival effectiveness in each stage of development. The first to develop was the **dorsal vagal, parasympathetic**, slow down response. It is very ancient response. Its innervation is nonmyelinated, therefore it is not rapid in response. It brings immobilisation in life threatening situations. The activation of the **dorsal branch** can cause a freeze-or-faint response, or feel like tired muscles or dizziness from a flu. This activity of dorsal Vagus causing a “shut-down” response, can move us into immobility or dissociation.

Second evolutionary response is **sympathetic nervous system**, which developed second, and is all about mobilisation. In response to danger it activates the fight or flight response: increase of the heart rate, blood pressure, stimulates adrenal glands etc, sends blood into the large muscles and all the other activities necessary for us to fight against the danger or flee from it. For more on stress response see below. It is myelinated, therefore rapid in response.



Last to develop is the **ventral vagus**, the activation of which causes a pleasant, gentle relaxation, and serves the system of social activation. Together with other associated cranial nerves, it provides us with the so-called 'mobilization without fear'. We feel safe and healthy. We can maintain a vibrant tone without exhausting or collapsing. Emotions of friendship, cooperation, mutual support, parent-child bonding etc emerge. It is myelinated.

We can therefore distinguish 3 different states and the relevant nervous system dominance:

Stress, fight-or-flight – **Sympathetic branch** of the Autonomic Nervous System prevalence

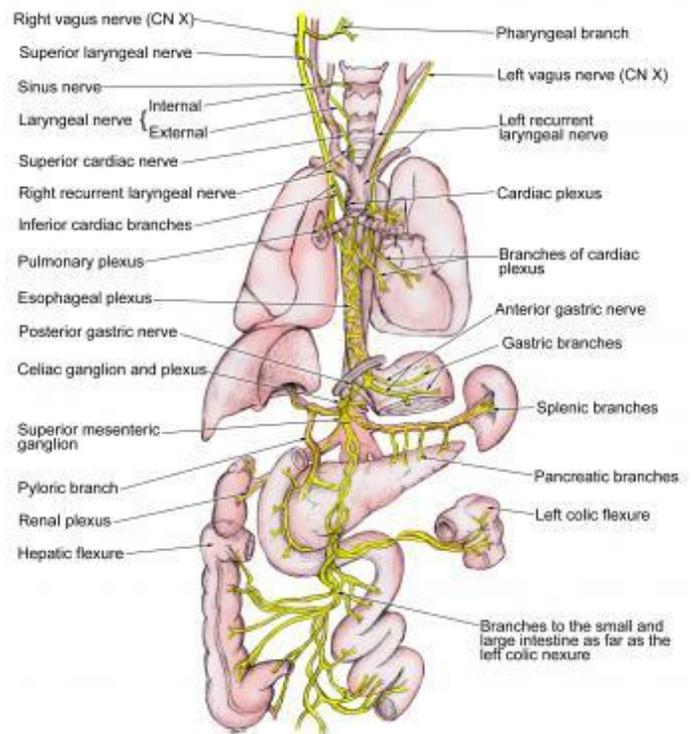
Depression, shut-down - **Parasympathetic system / dorsal Vagus** branch dominance

Balance, ease, pleasant feeling of coexistence with others and desire for socialization - **Parasympathetic system / ventral Vagus** branch dominance

The 3 parts of the autonomous system work together to control the activity of the organs, to bring about homeostasis, and to help us continuously deal properly with environmental conditions and conditions in the body.

The key to working with this system is to recognise that when threatened, our autonomous system closes out Ventral Vagus and retreats to an earlier, more primitive response to either sympathetic fight or flight mode (mobilization with fear), or depressive behaviour of parasympathetic dorsal Vagus (immobilisation with fear)

Then, according to Porges, we can activate the so-called Vagal brake. Porges believes that if the Ventral Vagus can be activated in situations of fear, it puts the "brakes" on the other 2 circuits, and can even get us out of our chronic dorsal Vagus or chronic sympathetic overactivation.



Stimulating the Ventral part of the Vagus nerve is recommended to

- * influence your nervous system
- * cope with panic attacks
- * Reduce pain
- * Reduce inflammation
- * Help revitalize your organs and cells by activating stem cells
- * Boost immune function
- * Reduce depression and anxiety
- * Improve performance

Stress-release techniques through stimulation of the ventral Vagus Nerve



Slow motion – Somatic Rolling on the Ground

Slow long breaths, especially with 1:1, or 1:2 ratio of inhale/exhale

Humming– Chest vibration

Tapping up and down the sternum

Jiggling the abdominal organs

Cold water or ice over the face

Song, chant, mantra

Yoga or other form of exercise when done with interoception

Meditation

Massage

Feather-like motion on the skin surface

Laughter

Interoception

When we are NOT in a state of interoception, we operate on the so-called "autopilot". Our decision-making and behaviour come from common patterns - like roads mas that we habitually take. When we are in a state of increased awareness, we are activating our insular cortex, which is responsible for emotional self-awareness, empathy, touch, homeostasis, and sense of harmony. We have more choices for making decisions.

Sensory and Motor

Sensory nerves gather information about the environment and send it to the brain, while the motor nerves send commands to the muscles (creating motion) or to glands to secrete hormones.

Sensory system is the part of the nervous system that is responsible for receiving and processing of sensory information, or more simply for the sensing. It uses information received from the environment. Sensory nerves enter the spinal cord from the posterior horns.

Motor system is the part of the nervous system that carries impulses to muscles and glands. It is responsible for movement. It exits the spinal cord from the anterior horns

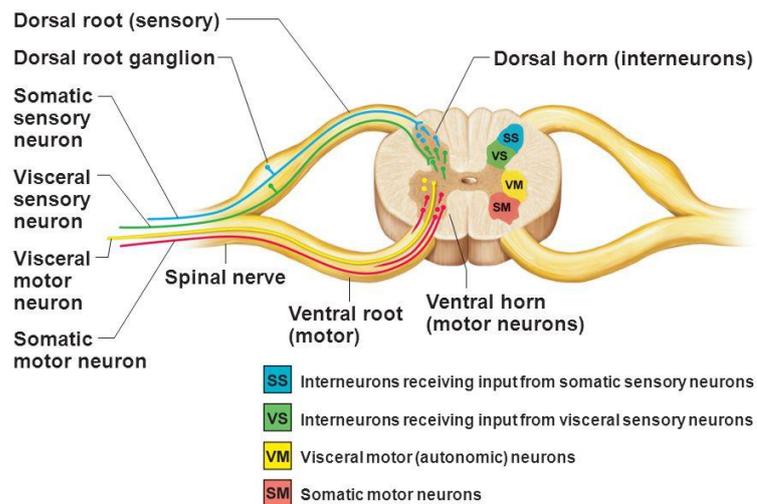
Embodiment practice:

Asana practice with an observation of the internal-external orientation.

Asana practice and differentiation of experience when we move from the back body (posterior roots connected to sensory nerves) and from the front (anterior roots connected to motor nerves)

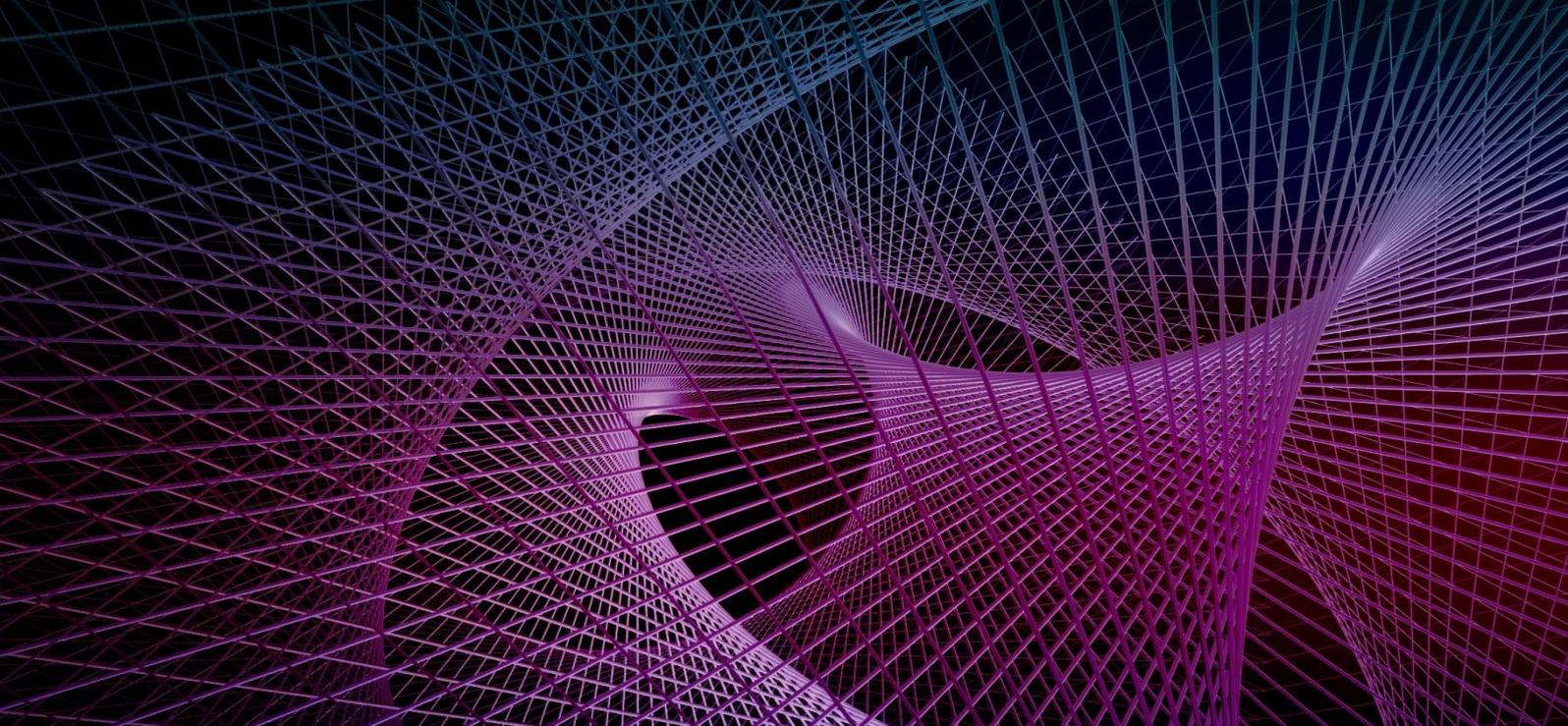
Remaining aware of the sensory stimuli, without reacting through the motor nerves.

At a deeper level, even the mental processing of the stimulus stops and we only remain in allowing it to happen, purely as a living experience. In Body-Mind Centering this process is called "sitting in the synapse". Consider when it is useful and when it is not.



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Figure 12.32



The Nervous System

Restorative Yoga, Sensit Somatics and Embodied Meditation

with Maja Zilih

Restorative Yoga



Sensit Yoga™
Somatics



Restorative yoga is a specific form of yoga that aims at **slowing down, relaxation, and regulation** of the nervous system. It uses gravity and other forms of support (walls, cushions, chairs blocks) to create **gentle passive openings** in the tissues and achieve **relaxation** in the entire **neuro-muscular system**.

It emphasises **healing, rest and regeneration**.

Maintaining restorative postures releases, hydrates and revitalizes fascia and the organ body. It allows those areas of the body that tend to accumulate stress, to gradually soften the resistance and surrender to gravity. This process calms the nervous system and can become "imprinted" as a **new habit** of releasing stress at will. Gradually, this practice can lead to the prevention of future accumulation of tension in the muscles, fascia and the organ system.

"Restorative poses are poses of being rather than doing"~ Judith Lasater

Restorative poses recommended for the BEGINNING of any regular yoga practice

Coming to the yoga class we often have a difficulty "arriving" with our whole being. Our mind is still busy and our body is still in the sympathetic nervous system prevalence. This may make us less available to sensing our needs and physical boundaries and more prone to injury. In the beginning of any regular asana practice, coming into our body and breath in a restorative pose is highly recommended.

The most suitable poses for the beginning of the practice are

- easy to set up, without requiring too much preparation
- preferably symmetrical, so that less time is required (in asymmetrical ones there are two sides)
- lying-down poses. The larger the body surface that is in contact with the ground, the easier the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system. Additionally, in the beginning, hips and hamstrings may be too tight to fully enjoy a seated restorative posture.

Constructive rest pose



In constructive rest we look for the "easy hold" for the knees

Savasana with Bolster



In Savasana with Bolster, the knees are relaxed

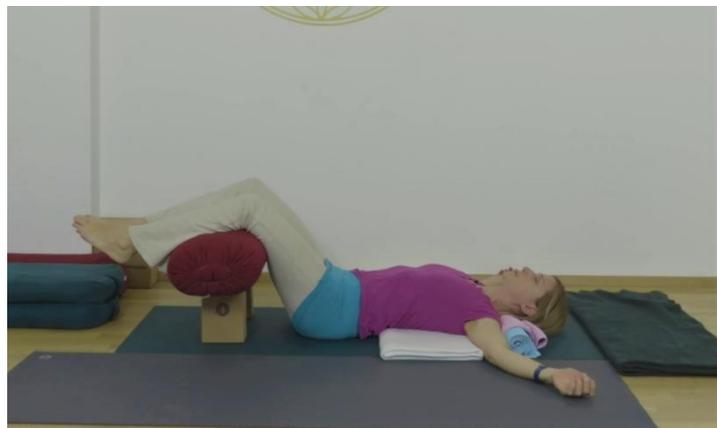
In both poses we may support the neck with a blanket, and there could be another blanket under the back for softness



Easy supine restorative pose with chest elevation – Using whatever is available for a simple slight chest elevation. Ideally it will be a blanket or two, but a towel or a piece of clothing can also be used.

- An extra towel can be rolled under the neck.
- A cushion or a bolster can come under the knees for greater lower back comfort
- If there are sand bags, place them on the pelvis, forehead and hands.
- When lying down bend your knees to lift the pelvis and elongate the tail, then gently place the pelvis back down.

Supine with chest elevated and legs lifted on a chair or blocks plus bolster. Adjust the chest height by increasing or decreasing the blanket layers. Shoulder blades are ***off*** the blankets.



Lying on the belly – Provided that the person feels safe, this pose stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. Feeling of safety can be enhanced by covering oneself with a blanket, or placing a bolster on top of the spine.

Balasana – Child’s pose Can be entered directly from the previous pose. Optionally add a bolster between your calves and thighs.





Active opening of the shoulders and upper back

This one is especially recommended if you feel tight around the shoulders and upper back, and/or if you intend to practice back bends.

The blanket is under the shoulders (not shoulder blades). The hands are on the ground, blocks or a cushion above the head. The belt can be placed around the upper-arms, just above the elbows (see pic 1B). To lie down, first come to the side, place the center of your one shoulder on the blanket, and then slowly roll onto your back. The arms will spontaneously open outwardly. However, if you want a more active shoulder opening, then the hands remain active without relaxing in an outward turn. To avoid overextension in the lower back, before lifting the arms, lift the pelvis 5cm off the ground, lengthen the tail, and then lower the pelvis back down to the floor again. Stay with relaxed breathing and no effort to press the back into the ground.

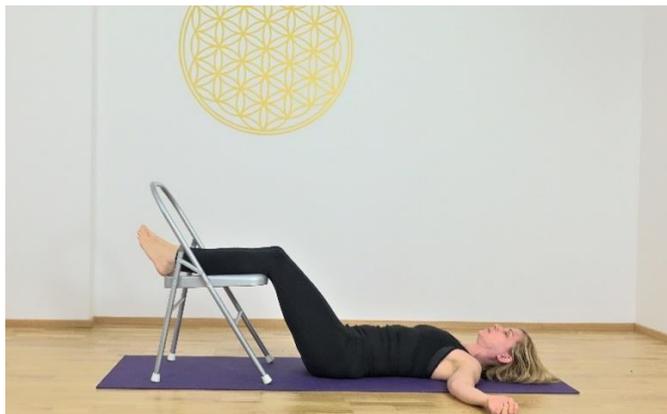


PIC 1A





Savasana with shins on a chair



Attention has to be paid on the right propping. Pelvis should be resting, completely on the floor and the shins should be fully supported by the chair. Therefore, if a person's thighs are longer than the height of chair seat, we need to put extra blankets under the shins (see picture A). Conversely, if a person's thighs are shorter than the height of the chair seat, then the body needs to be elevated (picture B)

A – shins need to be elevated

B – torso and pelvis need to be elevated



Your notes and experiences:



Restorative Yoga Sequence for the Kidneys and Balanced Adrenals

Inspired by [Lisa Clark Yoga](#)

Kidneys are a very important organ in the body. Their primary job is to filter the blood. They remove wastes, control the body's fluid balance, and keep the right levels of electrolytes. All of the blood in our body passes through kidneys several times a day.

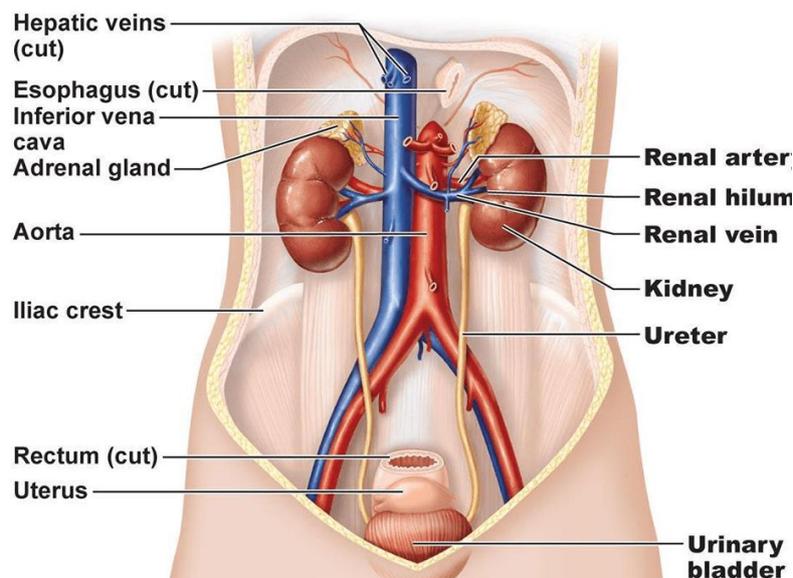
In Taoist tradition the Kidneys are the seat of Chi, vital or life-energy

“Known as the 'Minister of Power', the kidney is regarded as the body's most important reservoir of essential energy. The original prenatal energy (*yuan chee*) which forms the basis of life is stored in the kidney organ-energy system, which is why the kidneys are also known as the 'Root of Life'. In the Chinese view, the kidney organ system also includes the adrenal glands, which consist of the adrenal medulla and the adrenal cortex. These glands sit like hats on top of the kidneys and secrete a wide range of essential hormones that regulate metabolism, excretion, immunity, sexual potency and fertility. “⁶

Adrenals:

There are 2 parts to this gland. 1. Medulla (inner portion) prepares the system for fight flight or freeze. When we perceive the environment as unsafe, it produces adrenaline (epinephrine and norephedrine) which increases heartbeat and breathing while decreasing gastrointestinal and urinary activity. Governed primarily by the sympathetic nervous system, when adrenals are in balance they give us readiness for action and alertness that does not include stress. 2. Cortex (outer portion) which has 3 roles: a) governs sodium balance primarily by affecting exchange of sodium, potassium and chloride, b) raises blood sugar by breaking protein into glucose, c) Raises blood sugar level by promoting storage of glycogen in the liver, similar in action to insulin produced in the pancreas.

This 60-min sequence is dedicated to nourishing the kidneys and calming the adrenal glands.

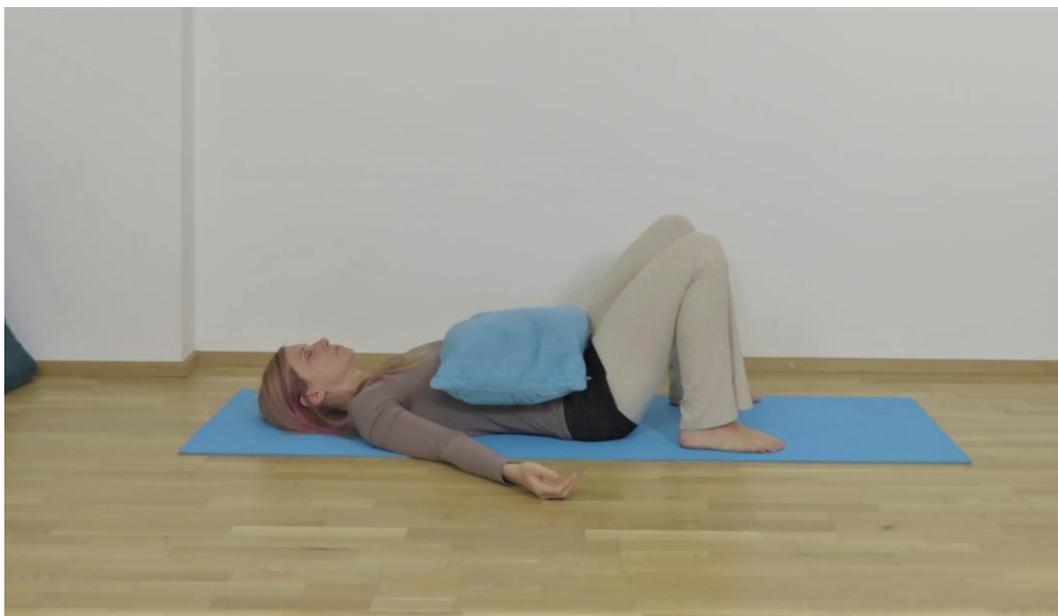


⁶ <http://lieske.com/channels/5e-kidney.htm>



Kidneys love warmth. Place warming pads or blankets whenever you are in a restorative belly-down position.

Constructive rest with weight placed on top of the lower ribs. It can be a sandbag or a big buckwheat bolster. The weight should give you a pleasant sense of compression.





Restorative Child pose, with a folded blanket wrapped around the kidneys



Viparita Karani with

- a bolster under the lower back and lower ribs
- another bolster placed on top of a block, and between the legs and the wall
- Legs inside the strap (upper shins)
- Blanket or zafu cushion on top of the feet gives extra weight and grounds the legs into the hips

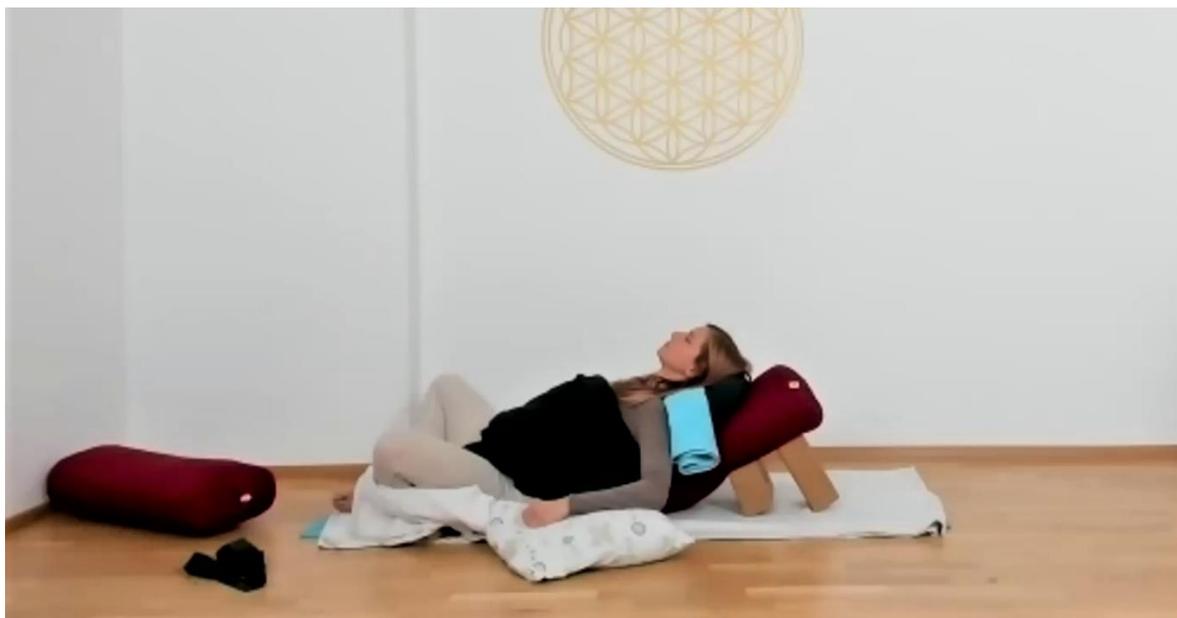




Restorative twist, both something between the legs and under the lower leg. With a hand jiggle the kidney or just hold your hand there. Other hand can come to knee: kidney-knee connection.



Supta Baddhakonasana Blanket fold over feet and under knees. Another blanket for a kidney-rap.



Savasana supported, optional with feet on a chair





Somatic Spiralling - Head Roll

Head Spiral (for release of spine)

Head roll or head-spiral can be used for

- Overactive thinking mind
- Tension in the neck, head and jaws
- Whole-spine release
- Parasympathetic activation, especially because we are focusing on occiput and sacrum
- Practicing slow movement, but also exercising brain capacity to inhibit movement (such as when we want the body to descent to the ground without a sudden drop)

1. Start in constructive rest position. Feel the occipital bone at the back of your head.



Start to slowly roll your head to one side, then to other, pausing in the middle. Focus on the sensations in the head and neck.

Feel the different points of your head touching the floor as it rolls

When you make the movement very slow, you can track it and observe how far down the spine you can sense a response.



2. Now feel the sacral bone. Notice that sacrum and occipital have a similar curvy shape.

Start to roll, this time on both your sacrum and occiput harmoniously, in synchronicity.

The movement of the pelvis is not large. Part of your sacrum should always be felt in contact to the floor.

3. Now begin to wonder what in the body would have to happen, if you were to roll yourself all the way to your side.



You can bring your arms to embrace the ribs for easier rolling, or keep them loosely by your sides.



Initiate the roll with your head, then let pelvis and legs come along and now roll all the way to one side. If you continue the movement of the head, you will find your forehead closer to, or even touching the floor.

Let your head also initiate a return. Notice that you are slowly pouring weight, tracking the rolling point on the floor.

Always pause after 3-4 rolls and notice how you are feeling overall, side to side, how is your connection to the Earth, what is your inner-connectivity level, and what is the tone of your nervous system.

Distinguish local from whole-body movement in the roll from supine to the side

With left knee bent, right leg long, explore the push into the left foot and the resulting journey of the knee to the right. – 10 times. Notice that the movement starts in the foot and travels into the hip, where it is executed between the thigh bone and pelvic bone, while the rest of the body remains quite passive.

Now do the same, but instead of letting the knee come far to the right, direct the knee down, towards the direction of the other foot, or towards the bottom of your mat. Notice the resulting difference in what happens in the pelvis, and then in the spine. Notice the response of your spine. How easily to the vertebrae get carried into movement? Can you make it very slow, in order to observe movement of each vertebrae? How far do you take your roll?

Your notes and experiences:



Hand-to-heart roll

Starting position: Either constructive rest pose, or right knee bent, left leg long. Left arm extended on the floor to the side – hand at shoulder level. Right hand placed on the heart.



In the roll the body spirals to the left, while simultaneously the right hand – with conscious, present touch - travels along the body from the heart to left arm, all the way to left palm, and possibly even beyond.



Feel the receiving side and the travelling side. Relax the receiving side completely.

Variations – left arm that is on the floor is a little higher up, shaping a half “Y” with the torso. The travelling hand again traces all the way to palm, but this time, the eyes are following the hand and the head turns accordingly. Especially recommended for side-lying preparation, as well as for practicing eventual full roll to the belly.



Simple spiralling from X to C (foetus)

Way 1: From X, stand the right foot. The push of the foot and extension of the knee down will spiral the torso to the left. To come back, upper body moves first, pelvis and legs follow.

Way 2: From X, distinguish the 2 halves. One half will condense, elbow and knee coming towards each other, the other half will expand. Then the expanded half will spiral around, coming on top, brining you into the C shape. To come back, upper body moves first, pelvis and legs follow

