

# **Integrative Restoration**

## **iRest® Yoga Nidra Meditation**

**For Health, Healing and Awakening**

**Richard C. Miller, PhD**

*When we dwell in the pleasures of our senses, attractions to further pleasures arise. From attraction comes attachment, the desire for possession that leads to passion and burns into anger. Passion and anger cloud judgment and lead to confusion, the inability to learn from past mistakes and the failure to choose between what is wise and what is unwise. This is the path of separation. But when we move in the world of the senses, yet keep our senses in harmony, free from attachment to attraction or aversion, we rest in the wisdom heart of our Essential Nature, the true equanimity of Being, in which sorrow and suffering cease. —Richard Miller, BG, 2:61-66.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Integrative Restoration*, or *iRest Yoga Nidra Meditation*, is a modern-day secular adaptation of the ancient meditative practice of Yoga Nidra. It is a form of self-inquiry that research shows effectively reduces PTSD, depression, anxiety, insomnia, chronic pain, and chemical dependency; while increasing health, resiliency, and well-being. iRest Meditation provides us with guidelines for going beyond our self-limiting beliefs and conditioning. Its practice allows us to break free of restrictive patterns, and to live a contented life, free of conflict, anxiety, fear, dissatisfaction, and suffering.

iRest enables us to unravel the mysteries of life, and to answer such questions as: “*Who am I?*”, “*Why am I?*”, “*What is all of this?*” In its ultimate form, iRest reveals the secret of enlightenment so that we may recognize our Essential Nature as unconditioned pure Awareness.

During iRest we enter receptive states of deep relaxation and meditation, while remaining aware and alert. iRest reveals our innate intelligence and intrinsic clarity. Its practice enables us to uncover and access our inherent wisdom — an intelligence that knows the exact revelations and solutions we

need to address the issues and conundrums that we face in daily life.

During iRest it is common for spontaneous physical, psychological, and interpersonal transformational shifts to occur. This is due to the burning away of negative patterns of conditioning through the fire of discriminative insight. This fire ignites as we tap into our innate inner wisdom. This wisdom is so powerful, that it easily burns through even the most formidable destructive patterns of physical and psychological conditioning.

iRest is an educational process that restores our understanding of who we really are. It is a fundamental resource for establishing physical and psychological health and well-being, as well as transforming our personal, interpersonal and professional relationships.

As a meditative form of self-inquiry, iRest helps us investigate and dispel our mind's penchant for misperceiving separation where separation does not exist. iRest helps us move from separation, anxiety, fear and self-judgment into equanimity, stability, compassion, and love. During iRest, we dispel all that we are not, so that we may realize what we truly are. In this perspective, iRest is a process of subtraction rather than addition, as exemplified in the following poem.

*When you have something, it will be taken away.  
But when you are empty, what is there to lose?  
Prior to all gain, what is present?  
And what is, when even this is left behind?  
Meditation is not addition. It is subtraction.  
Take away all that you believe yourself to be,  
and you rest in the unconditioned fullness of love:  
So be quiet. Cease all doing. Stop all non-doing.  
Don't make this difficult.  
You see there is no way to get there from here.  
For there is no 'there' to go to.  
So just be. Here. Now. Before 'I' arises  
and mind makes a difference.*

—*The Fullness of Love* by Richard Miller

iRest is an in-depth process. It reconnects us to our deepest, most intimate, intuitive and spontaneous intelligence. It is simple to learn

and easy to practice. Once learned, it becomes a tool we can utilize throughout our entire lifetime.

### **Awakening from the Dream**

*Yoga* is often translated as ‘union.’ It represents the action of awakening to, and embodying, or union with, our underlying Essential Nature. This undivided Being is the birthing ground of intuitive and authentic spontaneity.

Verse I.2 of the *Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* defines *Yoga* as: *yogas citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*. In doing so, it utilizes the Sanskrit word, *nirodha*. As a verb, *nirodha* means the action of ‘stilling’ the mind. As a noun, *nirodha* is a description of our Essential Nature as absolute unconditioned ‘Stillness.’

The sutra can be translated as:

*“Yoga happens when we embody our Essential Nature as unconditioned Stillness, which is always present, whether movements of consciousness are present or absent.”*

*Nidra* (Sanskrit: *sleep*) represents the state in which we are asleep or unconscious to our Essential Nature. *Nidra* occurs when we forget our Essential Nature because we are overly identified and involved with our sensations, emotions, thoughts, and actions based on misperceptions and reactive patterns.

*Yoga Nidra*, and its modern adaptation as *iRest Meditation*, represents a paradox — a play on the words, ‘asleep’ and ‘awake.’ It means ‘*sleep of the yogi*.’ It implies that the normal person is asleep to their Essential Nature through all states of consciousness — waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Whereas, the *yogi* is one who is awake to their Essential Nature across all states, even when their mind is in the state of sleep. We engage *iRest* to awaken from our ‘sleep’ of conditioned patterns, so that we may live as, and from, our Essential Nature of unconditioned Being.

When we fall asleep, we believe that the dream-self and dream-world are real. Upon awakening from sleep, we recognize that the dream-self and dream-world are, in truth, empty of substance. They are only projections of the mind.

During the waking state, most people believe that the world around them is made up of solid and separate objects. They believe that waking thoughts and external objects are real. But few people ever question the validity of these notions they have about sleep and waking.

Could it be that waking state thoughts and external objects are also fabrications and projections of the mind, just as are dream images? *iRest* is a process whereby we explore and discover truth-filled answers to these questions.

*iRest* reveals that all waking and dream phenomena — Sensation, emotions, and thoughts — are constantly changing — coming and going — morphing from one into another — a mass of swirling sensations, emotions, and thoughts (Sanskrit: *parināma: changing*).

But *iRest* doesn’t stop here. It also investigates the ego function, which identifies with, and appropriates for its own, all that’s changing. (Sanskrit: *ahaṁkāra: The mental pattern of thoughts that give rise to a sense of ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and ‘mine.’*)

When we inquire into the ‘who,’ ‘what,’ and ‘where’ of the ego-function — which is the witness of the smorgasbord of changing phenomena — we discover that it is not a solid and unchanging entity. It is constantly changing. Sometimes present. Sometimes absent. As research shows, the ego is only a thought; ultimately empty of substance.

Upon exploration, we recognize that there is an unconditioned mysterious essence that exists beyond the limitations of conditioned changing phenomena. This essence is experienced as an unqualified ‘*Presence*’ or

‘Being’ in which everything — during both waking and dream states — is born, unfolds and dissolves. iRest is the process whereby we explore and discover the truth of this, our underlying Essential Nature. In the words of Buddha:

*There is ‘this’ that is beyond the entire field of matter, the entire field of mind; that is neither of this world nor another. This I call neither arising, nor passing away; neither dying nor rebirth. It is without support, without development and without foundation. This is the unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unconditioned. This I call the end of suffering. ~ Udāna 8:3/80*

### **Awake at Last**

When we are truly awake, as iRest invites us to be, we are no longer swayed by, or identified with any thought, belief, emotion, sensation, image, or action. We remain awake, aware, and embodied as Essential Nature, no matter our circumstance. When we are truly awake, we recognize that the fundamental essence of Essential Nature is present across all states of waking, dreaming, and even deep sleep.

We uncover Essential Nature by recognizing its distinct ‘flavor’ of unshakable peace, equanimity, compassionate love, discriminative wisdom, and authentic and spontaneous action. When we abide as Essential Nature we embody our ultimate potential as a human being. Here, our actions, thoughts, and deeds are in harmony with all of life.

From the perspective of iRest then, the true yogi is one who, whether asleep or awake, understands the fundamental nature of Reality: *that there is only Essential Nature. All that is perceived is an expression of Essential Nature.* Our human presence is Essential Nature incarnate. We are Essential Nature having the experience of being human *and* we are human beings having the experience of being Essential Nature. Both are true as everything is Essential Nature.

iRest is both a process and an organized set of meditative practices we engage to realize Essential Nature. As we practice iRest, our

beliefs and conditioning, which give rise to dissatisfaction, suffering, anxiety, fear, and other reactive physical and mental patterns dissolve and disappear. They are replaced by unshakable and unchanging equanimity that is ever-present, no matter our state of mind or body.

### **iRest and Tantra**

iRest is drawn from the teachings of *Tantra* (Sanskrit: *tan*: extending everywhere); a vast array of techniques that are designed to restore our innate understanding of Essential Nature. Tantra and iRest are not concerned with philosophical intellectualism or second-hand information. They are teachings that are concerned with first-hand knowing, where we stand free of psychological, familial, and cultural conditioning.

During iRest we systematically investigate the nature of the beliefs that define our personal identity. For instance, we believe that we are solid and separate and that there is an external world that exists independent of us. But we may never have deeply examined the actual reality of these beliefs.

During iRest we inquire into our first-hand knowing so that we can understand the nature of reality; who we truly are, and what the world truly is.

iRest helps us investigate and dispel the roots of conditioned beliefs that uphold our misperceptions of reality. iRest dissolves the obstacles that stand in the way of our leading an authentic life filled with purpose, meaning, and value. And for those who are interested, iRest awakens us to living an enlightened life; awake to our underlying Essential Nature.

### **The Perfection of This Moment**

iRest reveals the fact that every situation is paired with its perfect response. When we engage our harmonious responses, we experience a sense of freedom, delight, and astonishment at how perfect every moment is.

As core misperceptions, beliefs, and expectations dissolve, as we engage harmonious actions, we abide more and more in authenticity, which opens the door to our glimpsing Essential Nature — the source out of which authentic actions arises.

Glimpsing Essential Nature, we realize that we are not limited and finite as we mistakenly thought we are. We discover, instead, that we, like everything around us, are expressions of an undivided wholeness that interconnects everything. As we embody our underlying Essential Nature, we realize and radiate qualities of unchanging peace, well-being, joy, love, kindness, and compassion that are always present, even during our greatest difficulties. When we live our authenticity, we discover that validation comes directly from Essential Nature, not from external authorities. We recover our gyroscope of internal stability that naturally arises from Essential Nature, that cannot be disturbed by inner or outer events, nor swayed by the opinions of others.

### Origins of iRest

The origins of iRest can be traced back to ancient Eastern spiritual teachings, which include the nondual teachings of *Trika-Shāsana*, as found in the revelatory *Siva Sūtras*; *Tantra*, in such texts as the *Mahānirvāṇa*; *Vedānta*, in writings such as the *Māndūkya* and *Taittirīya Upanisads* and *Tripūra Rahasya*; and the teachings of *Yoga*, as found in *Yogataravālī* and the *Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* with its emphasis on *pratyāhāra* (Sanskrit: restoration of the senses to their natural functioning) where the mind's propensity to identify with its projections is transcended and we realize Essential Nature as our innate felt-sense of interconnected undivided wholeness and unchanging peace and well-being.

Various yogis have revitalized the practice of Yoga Nidra during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably through the teachings of *Swami Sivananda* and his disciple *Satyananda*

*Saraswati*, founder of the Bihar School of Yoga; *Swami Rama* of the Himalayan Institute and his direct disciple, *Swami Veda Bharati*; and *Sri Brahmananda Saraswati* (*Ramamurti S. Mishra*), an initiate of the Radhaswami School of Surat Shabda Yoga, among others.

The current adaptation of Yoga Nidra — Integrative Restoration ~ iRest Meditation — is based on Dr. Richard Miller's integration of the ancient Eastern teachings of Yoga, Advaita, Kashmir Nondualism, Taoism, Buddhism, Sufism, and Western teachings from the Judeo-Christian traditions, along with his decades of studying Western psychology, physiology, and research, and his years practicing as a clinical psychologist and teacher of yoga.

### First-Hand Knowing

iRest helps us inquire into the limiting beliefs that are based in psychological, spiritual, familial, social, and cultural conditioning. While we have come to believe many things as true, iRest does not ask us to believe or disbelieve. Rather, it invites us to investigate what we assume to be true through a series of experiments, so that we may relinquish what we have been told (second-hand information), and come to our own first-hand understanding about the nature of reality, the world, and ourselves.

We take the physical world to be real and solid. But is this so? The mind says it is. Familial and cultural beliefs say that it is. But when we investigate the nature of an object, we find only vast space. Solidity gives way to molecules; molecules give way to atoms; atoms give way to electrons, which give way to quarks, which give way to energy, which gives way to empty spaciousness. When we truly inquire, the solidity that was here a moment before dissolves into spacious emptiness. Matter is devoid of solidity. Quantum physics recognizes this fact and affirms that all matter is simply 'compressed space.'

iRest also asks, “Are we separate from what we observe. Are we separate from everything around us?” The mind says, “Yes.” But when we observe something, we influence what we observe, because we are not separate from what we are observing. Our belief in separation dissolves in the light of true inquiry.

Werner Heisenberg, the founder of quantum mechanics stated in his 1927 uncertainty paper that, “*The more the position of an object is determined the less its momentum is known, and vice versa.*” He uncovered what Yoga has affirmed for centuries, that as an observer we are not separate from what we observe. The observer and object are actually not-separate; not two. What appears to be a solid universe is empty space.

We believe in the reality of ourselves as a separate and distinct entity ‘I’ or ‘me.’ Yet when we inquire to find the exact location of the self or ‘I,’ all we find is empty space.

‘I’ has neither location nor solidity. The feeling of being a self, or ‘I,’ is an afterthought, rather than a point of independent will and initiation. There is neither free will nor an independent ‘I’ separate from the spacious awareness of Essential Nature in which it arises. ‘I’ and ‘you’ are neither solid nor separate. In the terminology of Advaita, we are “not-two” (*Sanskrit: a = not + dvaita = two*).

This realization of the emptiness of ‘I’ or ‘self’ in no way implies a denial of will. Instead, Essential Nature is affirmed as the source of will and action. As we inquire and come to first-hand understanding, we realize that rather than, “‘I’ am willful,” it is more accurate to say, “Willfulness is present.” Willfulness exists; it’s “just not personal.” (*To further your understanding please read Gazzaniga: The Mind’s Past.*)

While it is easy to prove that matter is actually empty of solidity — that the self, or ‘I’ is a fictitious entity without substance, reality or free will — unless we find a way to

embody these understandings, they remain intellectual formulations that have no substantive impact on our lives. Scientists who make these incredible discoveries go home at night to their families as if they’ve discovered nothing of significance. Our lives don’t change because we’ve intellectually uncovered the fact that ‘I don’t exist’; that ‘there is no personal will,’ and that Essential Nature is empty spaciousness and the source of everything.

iRest insists that our intellectual understanding give way to heartfelt first-hand experiencing. It is one thing to understand facts conceptually. iRest beckons us to understand them as our actual embodied experience. Living embodied wisdom frees us from anxiety, fear, and doubt; replacing them with equanimity and an inner gyroscope of unshakable peace, well-being, and stability.

During iRest we directly face the ever-changing movements of our body, mind, senses, and the world, while we undertake simple and direct inquiries. If we believe that, “I am a separate entity distinct from all others,” then we inquire, “Is this true? What is life like when I believe that this is true? And what is it like when I don’t take this to be true?”

We believe we are a body and when the body dies, we die. iRest asks that we inquire, “Is this true? Am ‘I’ in this body or is this body in ‘me’?” When we experience anxiety or fear we inquire, “Am ‘I’ in fear or is fear in ‘me’? Who or what is registering this fear?” When we are stuck in negative thought patterns, we inquire, “If this thought is a movement in ‘me,’ who and what am ‘I’?”

To truly answer these questions, we must relinquish second-hand beliefs that are based on the testimony of others (i.e., our familial and cultural conditioning). iRest offers tools we can use to gain first-hand knowledge of who and what we are, and how the universe works. Only then can we be our own authority, free from the tyranny of ‘shoulds’

and the opinions of others, “a light unto ourselves.”

## Two Paths of Understanding

iRest is comprised of two paths, one *progressive* and the other *direct*. These paths are further subdivided into a series of distinct steps, which are delineated in this manual, and other writings and recordings, to help your mind orient to the process of iRest. (Please visit the iRest Store at [www.irest.us](http://www.irest.us)).

When we are suffering, but don't know what to do, the mind easily becomes confused. We can feel at a loss as how to proceed in each situation. However, when we are properly oriented the mind relaxes, insight arrives, and right action is understood and engaged.

Doubts are natural and iRest encourages you to acknowledge the ones you have during inquiry. Write them down or tuck them into your mental filing cabinet so that you can inquire into their validity during iRest. Only when we acknowledge something and bring it into the clear light of awareness are we able to clear away false beliefs, and understand right action. When the mind is properly oriented, we can proceed with clarity through actions that are direct and efficient.

## The Progressive Path

The first phase of iRest emphasizes the *Progressive Path of Purification*. During this phase, we clear away obstacles that are preventing us from feeling physically and psychologically relaxed, safe, or secure; and receptively open and available. We develop a mind that is clear, one-pointed, and able to maintain its focus without being distracted.

Obstacles include limiting beliefs and conditioned psychological, mental, and behavioral patterns left over from past experiences. These are unconscious messages — inherited from our family, friends, educational system, culture, or ancestors — that we keep tripping over.

These patterns or residues (*Sanskrit: samskaras = dynamic residues left behind by experiences that have not been fully resolved*) are messengers that are calling us back to prior life situations to resolve what is otherwise incomplete. When we are properly oriented, these messages help us recognize our misperceptions so that we may engage authentic actions rather than reactive patterns. From the perspective of iRest: *Whenever we experience a reactive emotion we know we're dealing with a residue.*

iRest is a proactive form of self-inquiry that we engage to reveal and heal these residues. We engage the process of iRest to understand, process, integrate, and release them. As we do, we're able to move into constructive responsive actions that enable us to feel radiantly alive and capable of the deepest intimacy with ourselves and in our interpersonal relationships.

## The Law of Opposites

Every feeling, emotion and belief co-arises with its complementary opposite. (For an in-depth explanation of the Law of Opposites see chapter five, *The Sheath of Intellect*.) Happiness co-arises with sadness, peace with agitation, dark with light, etc. During the progressive phase of iRest we learn to welcome and experience all pairs of opposites that make up the content of our consciousness.

Take for example the *Emotional Body*. (See chapter four, the *Sheath of Feelings and Emotions*.) During iRest we learn to welcome opposing feelings of sadness and happiness, fear and security, helplessness and potency, anger and peace, agitation and equanimity, etc. As we welcome opposites of emotion, fully experiencing them without attachment or aversion, opposites resolve, often in unexpected ways. When we welcome both opposites at the same time, they can also reveal the ground of Essential Nature from which they arise.

## Sheaths of Identification

During the Progressive Path of Purification we examine and move progressively through six koshas, or sheaths of identification (*Sanskrit: kosha = sheath*).

Koshas are responsible for our belief in being a separate, limited ‘self,’ ‘I,’ or ‘me’ who is born, dies, and experiences dissatisfaction and suffering. These sheaths include the:

1. Physical Sheath: annamaya
2. Energy Sheath: prāṇāmaya
3. Emotional Sheath: manomaya
4. Mental Sheath: vijñānamaya
5. Sheath of Joy: ānādamaya
6. Sheath of I-ness: asmitāmaya

Classical Vedanta proposes five sheaths. iRest adds a sixth, the *asmitāmaya* that represents the mind’s identification with the ego-I thought, that gives rise to the misperception of being an individual ‘doer’ (*kalā kañchūka*).

By exploring these six sheaths of identification we can relinquish, or dis-identify from conditioned patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that no longer serve us. Our work during the progressive phase of iRest is designed to free us from the past and return us to our innate ability to spontaneously recognize and engage authentic behaviors that are appropriate to each life situation and circumstance.

iRest teaches us how to live amidst the complexities of life while remaining established as our innate unchanging disposition of equanimity and well-being, no matter our circumstances. By treading the progressive path of iRest, our reactive residues are purified of stress, tension, and conflict; and give way to authentic and responsive right actions.

## False ‘Self,’ True ‘Self’

So, who is this ‘self,’ ‘me,’ or ‘I’ to whom these experiences are happening? Living in a human body brings with it the undeniable sense of being a separate ‘self,’ or ‘I.’

However, our true Self is different from the belief in being an ego-I, which is a false conviction based on the misperception of separation. In contrast, the experience of being our true Self arises as a characteristic of our underlying Essential Nature and is experienced as an unchanging equanimity and well-being during good times as well as adversity.

The belief in being a separate ‘ego-I’ dissolves upon close inspection, while a purified sense of ‘I-ness’ remains as an unchanging essence that is both immanent and transcendent. It manifests immanently as our embodied experience of being human. It manifests transcendentally as the experience of our Essential Nature.

Immanence and transcendence are paired opposites that mutually co-arise. Together they affirm the understanding that Essential Nature and its expressions are not-separate. The separate world that our senses perceive is simply a reality projected by the mind. The mind is genetically engineered by nature to divide what is not-separate into the many.

That said, iRest reveals that it is possible to experience the ‘slings and arrows’ of life without becoming caught in the painful throws of dissatisfaction and suffering that arise when we are caught by, and live only from, unconscious patterns of conditioned existence. iRest awakens us into the spectacular, but overlooked realization of Essential Nature, which enables us to step off the wheel of conditioned beliefs. While life continues, we are no longer at the mercy of emotional reactivity. Here, we abide in and as Essential Nature, which enables us to see through reactivity and engage authentic, responsive, and compassionate actions.

## Full Stop

When we’ve read enough, studied enough, and exhausted all avenues in our search for lasting happiness, we’re ready for iRest. We’re ready to know our true Self, as unchanging and always present Essential

Nature that is full of peace and well-being, and is here before, during, and after every changing experience.

iRest invites us to inquire deeply into every experience we have so that we can realize that, *“I am not these six sheaths of sensation, energy, emotion, thought, desire, and ego. I am unchanging spacious Essential Nature out of, and in which, everything is unfolding.”*

### **The Direct Path**

As we tread the progressive path we are invited to inquire into the question, *“Who or what am I?”* When we ask this question we are engaging the *Direct Path*.

While the Progressive Path unfolds along a step-by-step sequential course of purification that clears away the obstacles that stand in the way of our realizing Essential Nature, the Direct Path entails our direct, sudden and non-sequential recognition of Essential Nature itself.

While most people encounter the Direct Path only towards the end of their spiritual search, it can unfold at any time. During the progressive phase of iRest our attention is on the constantly changing movements that are unfolding *in* awareness. As we learn how to welcome them, we realize that they are not problematic in and of themselves. It is the mind’s attachment or aversion to them — for them to be different and other than they are — that lies at the root of dissatisfaction, suffering, and sorrow.

As we give up trying to change these movements, we settle into accepting them as they are, and life as it is. We recognize that every situation arrives with a corresponding right action, that when engaged, feels in harmony with ourselves, and the totality of the universe. Here, self-judgments, shame, guilt, and blame are spontaneously relinquished; and our attention is freed to inquire into the nature of the awareness in which these movements are unfolding. When we inquire into the nature of awareness, we

step onto the Direct Path of iRest.

### **Being Aware of Being Awareness**

When attention turns towards awareness, awareness becomes its own object. Awareness aware of awareness is ultimately an untenable position — an infinite regression. How can there be two when there is, in reality, not-two?

When we comprehend this fact, the mind spontaneously relinquishes its penchant to divide what is indivisible into separate parts. Here, misperception ceases, and the two resolve back into being undivided.

This restoration reveals an aspect of Essential Nature, as uncaused Being. Here, the ego-function is recognized to be only a movement of thought, a mental projection, and a figment of imagination lacking ultimate reality or substance.

While direct understanding occurs in a timeless moment, the progressive path of purification is helpful for preparing the ground, so that we can live established as Essential Nature.

The direct path emphasizes the ease with which we can glimpse Essential Nature. The progressive path emphasizes the understanding that it takes time for this realization to be established as our everyday reality. Clarity of mind and freedom from distractions are two necessary components for being established as Essential Nature.

*Truth is already the case.  
It is not some ‘thing’ that can be  
achieved, or in any way obtained.  
Embracing this  
understanding opens the  
door of meditation.  
To understand truth, all seeking must  
stop. If you are walking and  
suddenly stop, there is no more  
walking.  
If you are minding and suddenly  
stop, there is no more minding.  
In this wondrous delight of Being,  
Truth reveals Itself, to Itself*

— Richard Miller: *Truth*, in *Being Home*



## Two Wings

We can liken ourselves to a bird with two wings. One wing is our innate intelligence — which is revealed as we learn to abide in discriminative wisdom.

The other wing is love. We need both wings to fly straight and true to the goal of self-understanding and awakening to our Essential Nature.



### Wisdom

Discriminative wisdom (*Sanskrit: viveka khyāti*) surfaces as we tap into our inner resource of inherent intelligence. Here, we innately possess this ability to recognize and distinguish between relative and absolute truths.

Relative truths change over time. Today we may say that we love someone, whereas a year from now we may no longer feel this way. But the *Absolute Truth* of Essential Nature doesn't change over time. It is always the case, no matter time or circumstance.

We possess the wisdom to act with appropriate actions in response to the challenges we face in each moment. iRest is a process that awakens this innate wisdom, which is our inner guide or *guru*. (*Sanskrit: gu = darkness + ru = that which dispels.*) The word *Guru* represents an aspect of Essential Nature that manifests in our mind as innate wisdom that knows how to dispel all misperceptions that exist in the mind.

The role of the outer teacher, and the practices of iRest, help awaken our inner *Guru*, who is the real teacher. Through the process of iRest, we learn to trust our innate ability to discriminate. We learn to step out of the conditioned mind. We learn to meet and respond to life on its terms, not ours. We learn to discriminate between what is constantly changing, and unchanging Essential Nature. (*For more, see: Yoga Sūtra*

*of Patañjali, chapter II, verse 5.*) With the dawning of discriminative wisdom, we recover our capacity to truly listen, reflect, and learn from the actions of those around us and ourselves.

iRest teaches us to turn and face our inner, self-judging critic. It shows us how to listen, and hear what is true from the voice of our inner guru. When we learn to discern, and speak our innermost truths, the inner critic dissolves, replaced with the voice of discriminative wisdom.

Think of your inner critic as a messenger. It tries to get your attention whenever you ignore a piece of information. When you fail to heed this messenger, it knocks on your door with ever-increasing persistence, as it wants your attention. Over time, what was a benign messenger can degrade into an unruly critic. Unknowingly, you are involved in a game of hide-and-seek. You hide, while your messenger, often turned critic, seeks!

iRest strengthens your ability to turn and face this critic so that you can understand the information that it is trying to deliver to your doorstep. The moment we welcome our internal critic, without judging it or trying to get rid of it, the critic reveals its true form as a messenger.

### Love

Love is the other wing we need to fly straight and true to the goal of Self-Realization. Love is usually thought of as a changing emotion. But there is a more fundamental love: an unchanging expression of Essential Nature. While unchanging love is present at birth, family, culture, and conditioning often diminish it, as movements of self-judgment, inner criticism, self-loathing, shame, guilt, doubt, and self-hatred arise. iRest re-awakens our innate feeling of unchanging love. An amazing blessing occurs when we finally relinquish self-judgment in exchange for the fire of undivided love, which we feel within ourselves and towards those around us.

**Table 1. The Pointer Sisters**

<b>Pointer Sister</b> <i>What we believe we are...</i>	<b>Self-Inquiry Question</b> <i>that helps us return to Being and realize...</i>	<b>Being</b> <i>Our Essential Nature</i>
<b>1. Kalā</b> <b>Separate</b> Powerless Limited Doer	<b>Who am I?</b>	<b>Omnipotent</b> Potent Unlimited Being
<b>Kalā entreats us to believe that we are a limited doer; that there is something we must overcome to be happy.</b> As we lose touch with Being, we misperceive that we're a separate, limited 'doer' who needs to do something to regain our sense of wholeness. We feel powerlessness as we forget our omnipotence.		
<b>2. Vidya</b> <b>Confused</b> Limited Knowing	<b>Why Am I?</b>	<b>Omniscient</b> Unlimited Knowing
<b>Vidya entreats us to believe we have limited knowledge; that there is something we must know to be happy.</b> As we lose further touch with Being we feel that we are a limited knower who needs to know something to regain our sense of wholeness. We feel confused when we forget our inherent omniscience.		
<b>3. Rāga</b> <b>Lacking</b> Imperfect	<b>What am I?</b>	<b>Complete</b> Perfect
<b>Rāga entreats us to believe we are imperfect; that there is something we need to be happy.</b> As we continue to lose touch with Being we feel imperfect, and fall into feelings of lack, desire, attachment and aversion. We think that there is something we need to regain our sense of wholeness. We feel a sense of imperfection when we forget our inherent perfection.		
<b>4. Kāla</b> <b>Time Bound</b> Time Constrained	<b>When Am I?</b>	<b>Timeless</b> Eternal
<b>Kāla entreats us to believe that we are born, die, and that time rules our ability to be happy.</b> When we lose deeper touch with Being we feel that we live in time, identified with a past that our mind projects into a future. We believe that we are born, that we die, and that there is never enough time to accomplish what we need to regain our sense of wholeness.		
<b>5. Niyati</b> <b>Limited in Space</b> Contracted – Constricted	<b>Where am I?</b>	<b>Omnipresent</b> All Pervasive - Unlimited Action
<b>Niyati entreats us to believe we are limited by our body; that there are actions to be accomplished to be happy.</b> When we lose touch with Being we feel that we are limited in space. We feel constricted, contracted and that there is some action that we need to accomplish to regain our sense of wholeness. We feel constrained when we forget our inherent omnipresence.		

## The Pointer Sisters

As *Rumi* advises us in the following poem, every joy, sorrow, anger, hurt, shame, pride, depression, and delight is a messenger.

*Our defects are the ways that glory gets manifested.  
Whosoever sees clearly what's diseased in himself...  
begins to gallop on the way.  
Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the bandaged  
place. That's where the light enters you. And don't  
believe for a moment that you're healing yourself.*

—*The Essential Rumi*, by Coleman Barks

There are many messengers constantly knocking on our door. They are trying to get our attention and to help us return home to our deepest truths.

Five of these messengers are especially helpful as each reveals a vital aspect of how we are confusing truth with untruth. I call them the *Pointer Sisters* (Sanskrit: *kañchūkas* = *covering, limitation*). (See Table 1.)

As we separate from our truths — be they the relative truths of life, or the absolute truth of

Essential Nature — these Pointer Sisters appear as messengers. They can either limit and conceal or — when properly understood — reveal our innermost relative truths, as well as the absolute truth of Essential Nature.

iRest teaches that all feelings, sensations and emotions — including self-hatred and inner conflicts — are messengers sent from Essential Nature to help us recover discriminative wisdom, unchanging self-love, peace, equanimity, well-being, and right action. When properly understood, the Pointer Sisters help us understand when we are separating from ourselves — when we feel powerless and weak rather than powerful and potent, confused rather than clear, lacking rather than complete, and bound by time and space rather than timeless and infinitely spacious.

iRest reveals that everything we experience is a portal that can bring us back home to our intrinsic wisdom, love, equanimity, and contentment. For instance, when we experience anger, we can fall into feelings of irritation, guilt, self-criticism, or pride. Or, we can realize anger as a messenger, and inquire as to which Pointer Sister is present. We may then inquire into underlying beliefs and expectations that our mind is projecting into the situation.

As an example, today the morning paper isn't delivered for the umpteenth time. Irritation arrives and I see that my mind's expectation is that, *"The paper should have arrived by now."*

Expectation is a function, designed by nature, to help the mind deal with the uncertainties of life. We all have expectations. They give us a sense that life is predictable, when in fact, it's not. *"If I leave now I'll arrive at the airport on time."* *"My plane will take off at noon."* *"The paper will arrive on time this morning."*

All these are what I call *"Ha, Ha"* moments, in that we don't know that expected events will happen, although our mind certainly pretends otherwise. But *"the Gods are always*

*laughing, as we make our plans."*

Expectations are helpful when life cooperates. But when life doesn't, we bump into our expectations and feel irritated or angry. We may try to blame others, when it is really our expectations that are causing our upset. Events don't give rise to anger. Our aversion of, or attached clinging to expectations, is what gives rise to anger.

iRest teaches us to welcome our expectations. In welcoming, emotions such as irritation and anger are listened to as messengers here to help us inspect the expectations that are fueling our emotions.

In welcoming, we see both the expectation and the inconvenient truth of the moment — that reality is other than what the mind wants. And we are invited to inquire: *"What right action may I engage to meet this situation?"*

My actual experience with the paperboy is that I cannot depend upon him to keep his delivery schedule. This is my experience, and does not need the validation of someone else. When I see the reality of the situation, free of the mind's expectation, clarity reigns, irritation subsides, and I see the right action I need to take to resolve the situation. If I want the paper on time, I need to either make a new arrangement with the paper's delivery department, or stop the delivery and go to the store myself.

This is the relative truth of the situation. Irritation is a messenger guiding me to see the disparity between my expectation that, *"He should keep his delivery schedule"* and reality, which is informing me that, *"He is often late with his delivery."*

When I accept the messenger of irritation and the message that it is trying to deliver. I can now say, *"I'll pick-up the paper myself at the corner market"* without feeling irritation, self-importance, or guilt. Instead, I experience discriminative wisdom that evokes clarity, compassion, and action.

There is a right action for every situation. This is the good news. Every emotion is a messenger — sent by the innate intelligence of Essential Nature — that is always revealing the right action that is required to meet each situation in our life perfectly. We know we are listening properly when our actions are accompanied with a feeling of discriminative wisdom and compassionate love.

The Pointer Sisters are here for one reason only: to bring us back to truth. Understand that each Pointer Sister arrives with a question, or inquiry to help you recognize how you've separated from some relative or absolute truth through misperception or lack of appropriate action.

Each Sister represents both the veil that arises when you misperceive, as well as its removal. In welcoming the veil, we are also welcoming Essential Nature that we've separated from — which is always present, even when momentarily veiled.

Each Pointer Sister embraces both the progressive path of purification that helps you recover relative truths and right actions, as well as the direct path that reveals the ultimate truth of Essential Nature.

### **Dissatisfaction**

We are all seeking happiness in one manner or another. This is the underlying motive behind every action we take.

When we don't know how to be happy we end up feeling dull, tired, lethargic, or dissatisfied. When we understand how to resolve and move beyond our conflicts we feel energetically alive and engaged.

Our mind is the most amazing instrument. It can analyze and carry out solutions to the most challenging of life circumstances. It possesses the ability to reflect the highest intuitive understanding of who we are and how the universe works. It can reveal the most profound joy and transcendent equanimity. And, it is equally capable of obscuring this

very wisdom with a cloud of mental confusion that can plummet us into dark nights of despair and depression. Despite its ability to attain the highest achievements, the mind produces dissatisfaction as a byproduct of its relentless search for happiness.

Our unending pursuit for the satisfaction of desires is a natural function genetically engineered into our mind. Most of the time, our mind is in a constant state of turmoil. It wants more, or less, of what we have in any given moment; and more, or less, of what we don't have. The mind is only content with what it has, or doesn't have, for short periods of time, because desire quickly reasserts itself — giving rise to the next search for happiness or relief from dissatisfaction.

This is why it's difficult to break our addictions to food, drugs, alcohol, or a past lover. And why it's difficult to find lasting satisfaction in our job, relationship, meditation, or spiritual practice. Desires are endless and are the driving force behind feelings of dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction, when experienced long enough, gives rise to chronic states of stress, and can lead to feelings of helplessness, sorrow, and suffering.

Thankfully, iRest offers a path that enables us to step off this endless, desire-generated, cycle of birth and rebirth. iRest teaches us how to stop identifying with our constantly changing desires, thoughts, emotions, and sensory impressions that are forever arising in our mind and body.

When we cease identifying with changing conditions, our innate wisdom naturally arises. We can see right actions. And we can inquire, free of distractions, into our Essential Nature and re-discover unchanging peace and well-being, rather than dissatisfaction. (*Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali*, Chapter I, verse 4)

It's not that iRest stops desire and thinking from happening. This is impossible, for the function of the body-mind is to think and

desire. iRest helps us arrive at a deeper truth, and reorients the mind to stop pretending that we are only our desires and thoughts.

When the mind reorients into this perspective, it no longer over-identifies with any state of mind or body that is arising. Attention is then free to perceive the radiant Essential Nature and its essential expressions such as Being and Awareness, within which all movements of thought and desire unfold.

When we recognize spacious Being and Awareness, we experience ourselves as free, amidst the activities of desire and thought. Our Essential Nature is spacious equanimity that is content, peaceful, compassionate, and clear, even when life is unfolding horrendous circumstances.

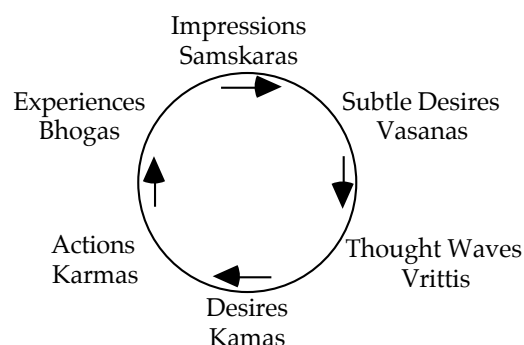
### Disidentification

Awakening to Essential Nature is predicated on our ability to cease identifying with the ever-changing movements of thought and desire. Disidentification, a natural process that occurs during iRest, entails the freeing of attention from being bound to desires, emotions, and thoughts. Circumstances are then set in motion that can lead to the ending of dissatisfaction and suffering. Thoughts, even malevolent or disruptive ones, are not the cause of dissatisfaction or suffering. Rather, it is our mistaken identification with them — and the ensuing confusion that arises — which lies at the root of dissatisfaction and suffering.

### Separation

The mind's over-identification with thought produces the belief that we are a separate self, or ego-I — a subjective 'seer' who is born and dies, has desires, and makes evaluative judgments. Taken together, these actions generate experiences, which register in memory as subtle impressions. These impressions, in turn, create new thoughts and desires and this *Cycle of Birth and Rebirth* turns again. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2. The Cycle of Birth and Rebirth**



The good news that iRest discloses is that we can break this cycle at any moment by learning to stop identifying with the movements arising in consciousness.

When we identify with changing phenomena, we experience ourselves as a limited, separate individual. When this cycle of identification dissolves, we realize our identity as unchanging Essential Nature that is unchanging compassionate love and peaceful equanimity, the unborn background in which changing phenomena arise.

The root cause of dissatisfaction and suffering is the mind's penchant for mistaking phenomena that arise in consciousness as the only truth. From the perspective of iRest this tendency is called misperception (*Sanskrit: avidyā*).

Misperception gives rise to our sense of separative ego-I identity, which is the result of two processes that occur simultaneously. First, a single thought — 'I' — is confused and mistaken to be a separate doer. And second, this 'I-thought' identifies with, and takes ownership of the contents of the mind.

### Being

*Being* is a universal *felt-sense* that we all experience (Gendlin, 1982). From birth, and throughout every moment of our life, Being is a quiet, background presence, or felt-sense that's always with us, but can easily go unnoticed.

Being is a feeling that you directly experience. While it is beyond your ability to describe with words, it is undeniably present and accessible to you, no matter what else you're experiencing. When you forget your felt-sense of Being, you can easily lose touch with your ground of non-separate wholeness, which like Being, is a fundamental quality of Essential Nature. When you don't recognize and experience your basic wholeness, or your felt-sense of Being, you'll always feel that something's wrong or amiss within yourself. When you recognize your wholeness of Being, you realize within yourself an indestructible inner resource that allows you to weather the deepest challenges you'll face in life.

Being arises along a continuum of experience. While Being is always present, over-identification with changing sensations, emotions, and thoughts and your belief in being a separate self, can distract attention from the felt-sense of Being. The practice of iRest is designed to help you recognize the unchanging felt-sense of Being, even as you're learning to dis-identify from the changing phenomena of your body and mind.

iRest affirms a basic tenet: dissatisfaction and suffering arise because of the mind's penchant for over-identifying with thoughts (particularly the I-thought). This gives rise to the belief of being a separate individual. The only way out is to simply observe this process of the mind.

When attention is freed from following thoughts, it is free to naturally rest in its inherent ground of Being, which can serve as a portal to enlightenment — the realization of our Essential Nature — and the end of dissatisfaction and suffering.

iRest teaches us to live in the truth of Being, while remaining free from over-identification with thoughts. Consistent observation of what is changing, and remembrance of what is unchanging (Being), invites the realization that we, as an observer, are more than what we are

observing. This intuitive insight lays the groundwork for the recognition of Essential Nature.

The ultimate import of iRest is to awaken as our Essential Nature, which transcends both body and mind. Essential Nature is neither a movement nor a non-movement. It is present whether the movements of thought, emotion, or sensation are present or absent.

Essential Nature is the ever-present background of the entire cosmos. It is, paradoxically, both 'empty' and 'full.' It is empty in that it contains everything, and remains when every 'thing' is eliminated. And it is full in that everything arises in it, and nothing is separate from it.

### **Everything Is a Pointer to Essential Nature**

Identification with states of mind and body can be likened to the words written upon this page. While reading, we aren't aware of the paper upon which the words are written. When we are identified only with thoughts, we miss the background of Essential Nature in which they're unfolding.

Without the paper, words cannot be written. Without Essential Nature, the multiple forms of mind, body, and universe cannot appear. Words are, in a manner of speaking, pointers to the paper upon which they're written. Just so, every movement in consciousness is a pointer to the ground in which it arises: Essential Nature.

We believe that we are each a separate entity, distinct from others. Is this all that we are? What is our life like when we take this to be the only truth? What would our life be like if we didn't take this to be the sole reality? iRest invites us to live prior to preconceived expectations and beliefs. Only then can we truly investigate Essential Nature, and be a light unto ourselves.

### **The Law of Awareness**

Awareness is the ever-present background that all changing states, and even the felt-

sense of Being arises within. The practice of iRest reveals Awareness as a deeper ground beyond Being. Awareness is undifferentiated, vast, and formless.

The power inherent in iRest stems from the *Law of Awareness: Whatever we are willing to be with, we go beyond*. Sensory impressions that we don't attach to or resist resolve and dissolve, like bubbles rising to the surface of a lake. As our conditioned beliefs rise to the surface of Awareness, they expand, pop, and dissolve into the spaciousness of Awareness.

iRest emphasizes the understanding that every movement of sensation, emotion, and thought needs to be free to arise in Awareness. As it is welcomed into Awareness it may appear to be momentarily troublesome. But it is simply seeking to be seen, heard, and connected with as a messenger. Once it has delivered its message, it is free to dissolve into the ground of Awareness from which it arrived. This is true of our every experience.

### **Non-Separation**

We mistakenly assume that sensory impressions (objects) are phenomena separate from ourselves (subject). We hear the clock ticking, as if it were outside our body. But sensory impressions, like the sound of the clock, are not separate from the mind that perceives them. Perceiving is a unified field. The perceiver is not separate from what is being perceived. The idea of separation is only a mental formulation.

Experience this yourself. Stop reading for a moment, and listen to the sounds around you. Examine the moment of perceiving. Can you sense how the thought of yourself as the perceiver (subject) who is separate from what is perceived (object) arises after the fact of each perceiving? Research reveals that the 'I' is an after-thought that arrives 300-500 milliseconds after perceiving has taken place. (*Gazzaniga, The Mind's Past*, pg. 71.)

The I-thought is designed to appropriate what is a past event and say, "*I am having this perception.*" In so doing the mind, through the actions of thinking and identification, divides perceiving into an apparent two — perceiver and perceived. (*Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali, Chapter II, verse 17.*) But the fact remains: in perceiving, 'I' is absent and there is only undivided multidimensional perceiving.

Now carry this understanding to its conclusion. Every 'thing' is unfolding in perceiving, and perceiving is unfolding in Awareness. When we abide as perceiving, separation is absent and the always-present background of Awareness can move foreground. As identification with thinking stops, perceiving reveals the purity of Awareness.

Enlightenment is simply a foreground-background shift, a change in perspective. What is foreground (perceiving and identification with the I-thought) moves background, and what is background (Awareness) moves foreground.

When we attempt to attach, push away, fix, change, or in any way 'refuse' a sensory impression, we are refusing an aspect of our Essential Nature because ultimately, we are made of the same substance as the impression that is being perceived. Refusing a perception is a movement born in conflict, for we are refusing what is ultimately not separate from our Essential Nature. We may be able to repress a sound, thought, emotion, or image but we cannot, ultimately, get rid of it. Better that we recognize everything just as it is. Things are just as they are, anyway, aren't they?

iRest teaches us to accept things as they are, and life as it is. When we accept, and welcome all that is, conflict ceases, the restless mind abides in stillness, and our underlying Presence as multidimensional Essential Nature, spontaneously shines forth.

## Five Movements of Changing Phenomena

Every object moves through its unique cycle of birth, growth, stability, decline, and death. These movements unfold within, and are not separate from, the background of Awareness. Whatever is born in Awareness eventually dissolves back into Awareness. Any attempt to control, refuse or repress this cycle of birth, growth, stability, decline, and death ends in failure.

By not refusing life, we live in the state of welcoming. By being with things as they are, we go beyond them. We take up our identity as the ground of Awareness, the ‘substance’ or source in which all things have their birth, growth, stability, decline, and death.

Embodying this understanding allows us to feel whole and undivided even amidst our greatest difficulties. Then we can experience equanimity and well-being even amidst feelings of unrest and lack of control.

Experiences are problematic only when we refuse them. When we live in welcoming, nothing binds. Dissatisfaction ceases. Suffering ends.

## Meeting Buddha, Being Buddha

During his lifetime, *Buddha* often reported being visited by *Mara*, the god of temptation, desire and misperception. On most occasions when *Mara* tempted *Buddha*’s mind with distracting thoughts, *Buddha* would not be swayed. And *Mara* promptly went on his way.

But on occasion, *Buddha* invited *Mara* in for a cup of tea and conversation. For even *Buddha* was not immune to troubling circumstances. Fortunately, *Buddha* knew how to welcome disturbing events by inviting each into Awareness. They stayed for tea and conversation, until, like *Mara*, they dissolved into the light of Awareness.

iRest is a practice that teaches us to be like *Buddha*, welcoming every sensation, thought, emotion, and conflicting circumstance into the fire of Awareness. We converse with

them until, like *Mara*, they dissolve into Awareness, from whence they arrived. And, like *Buddha*, we learn to reside as the equanimity and well-being of Essential Nature that is always present before, during, and after every circumstance.

## Welcoming

*Welcoming* is an active/passive process. Welcoming a belief or an emotion may mean the resurgence of long forgotten memories, or the upheaval of cathartic feelings. But even as these are unfolding, we remain anchored in the inner resources of Being and Awareness.

In welcoming, we accept life as it is, rather than refusing or rejecting it by dividing it into what the mind deems ‘bad’ or ‘good.’ From the perspective of iRest, thoughts and actions are viewed as neither morally ‘good’ nor ‘bad.’ They just are, as are our responsive actions to them.

The root of the word, ‘*sin*’ (*Greek: hamartia*) means: ‘*to miss the mark.*’ This is the way ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are used in iRest. Thoughts and deeds are viewed as functionally ‘bad’ when they take us away from Essential Nature (missing the mark), and functionally ‘good’ when they help us know ourselves as Essential Nature (hitting the mark).

Welcoming is a fundamental aspect of Essential Nature. When we live as Welcoming, we recognize that we are impersonally aware of and distinct from our experiences. At the same time, we are personally interconnected with all that we experience. From the perspective of iRest both are true. We are both not-separate *from* our experience, and active participants *with* our experience.

We engage in self-hatred when we do not accept ourselves as we are, or life as it is. Rejecting ourselves is a form of self-loathing. When we wish our experience to be other than it is we fight with reality. And when we fight with reality we always lose.



Reality always wins. This is 100% true!

When we welcome things as they are, life is just as it is, and we are just as we are.

Welcoming leads to spontaneous transformation wherein we relinquish all attempts to change the world or ourselves per beliefs we have about how things 'should' be. In Welcoming we live in harmony with life. We love ourselves as we are and life as it is.

When we live in Welcoming, at first the objects that are being welcomed are emphasized. Objects include other people, situations, thoughts, and emotions. But as we live in Welcoming, Welcoming itself is more and more emphasized. We live in Welcoming, for its own sake because of the joy and freedom it invites.

Then, in a moment of revelation, we may be seized by the intuition to turn and investigate the welcomer, 'self,' or 'ego-I' that we take ourselves to be. Because the 'I' that is inquiring is not separate from the 'I' that is being observed, they dissolve into our *Being Welcoming*, which knows no separation.

In this timeless moment, we realize that Welcoming is an essential aspect of who, what, where, when, and why we are, as Essential Nature (*See Table 1, The Pointer Sisters*). When we look upon the world through the eyes of heartfelt Welcoming, we realize that there is neither separate self nor separate other. There is no separation anywhere, under any circumstance except as a projection of the dividing mind. There is only non-conceptual Essential Nature.

This is the ultimate realization of iRest. This insight heralds the ending of conflict and suffering. Conflict breeds a host of children, including: depression, despair, anxiety, fear, insomnia, and physical disease among others. When we realize our Essential Nature — when we allow everything to be as it is, including our responses — these 'children,' — born of conflict — fade and disappear, as they are ultimately void of substance, born

from misperception.

When we are firmly entrenched in the belief of separation, when we believe we are a separate self or 'I,' we believe that 'we' are a 'welcomer.' As we realize our Essential Nature, however, we realize Welcoming as an expression of Essential Nature.

Welcoming needs no separate intermediary — no separate self — as a 'welcomer.' This is the paradox of enlightenment wherein the recognition spontaneously arises that there is no separate 'me.' There is Welcoming, but no 'one' who is welcoming.

### **Don't Withdraw, Transcend**

iRest can be described as a process whereby we transcend distracting sensory impressions until the mind abides undisturbed. The image



of a turtle with its head drawn inside its shell is often given to represent the process of drawing away from the sensory impressions of the world (*Sanskrit: pratyāhāra*).

However, true withdrawal does not entail withdrawing from sensory impressions, but the transcending of them.

For instance, when you are in a room with a loudly ticking clock, you don't need to withdraw from, or try to block out, the ticking sound. When you are open to hearing the sound without resistance, when you don't fight the sound, or try to get rid of it, your mind accommodates to, transcends and goes beyond the sound. This process is called *Habitation*. While the sound continues to be present, it no longer disturbs and distracts the mind.

During iRest we learn to acknowledge and welcome, rather than resist and withdraw from every movement that arises in consciousness. In this way transcendence occurs naturally.

We don't have to be yogis who live as tortoises with our heads tucked inside our

shells. We are yogis/human beings who are open to experiencing every movement of life. Our willingness to fully experience life is what allows us to transcend each experience and live our Essential Nature amidst the circumstances of life.

### Transcending the Senses

iRest is a form of *Mindfulness Meditation*, comprised of three levels:

1. Development of attention and concentration.
2. Mindful proactive engagement with changing states such as sensations, emotions, and thoughts.
3. Recognition of unchanging Awareness.

These three levels, when practiced together during iRest, support health, healing, and realization of Essential Nature.

iRest Meditation reveals the infinite potential of what we truly are. It is designed to reveal qualities of Essential Nature, such as Undivided Wholeness, unchanging Being and Awareness, and always present peace and well-being. In order to realize the unchanging, we often go through a process of internal development. Attention systematically moves from involvement with the outside world of objects, then disidentification from the world of inner objects — including sensation, breath, energy, emotions, and thoughts. When we welcome what is, through habituation, what is welcomed transforms. This process of disidentification encompasses the three levels of mindfulness.

The practice of disidentification with the senses (*Sanskrit: pratyāhāra*) leads to deep meditation (*Sanskrit: samyama*). Meditation naturally gives rise to release of attention from distracting tendencies (*Sanskrit: dhāranā*). Focused one-pointedness (*Sanskrit: dhyāna*) ensues, along with meditative absorption (*Sanskrit: samādhi*), and realization of our natural state of peace

and equanimity (*Sanskrit: sahaḥ*).

The practice of iRest begins with disidentification from the physical and energy body, emotions, cognitions, and images. This process focuses the mind, develops concentration, and invites one-pointedness. This enables the mind to move from involvement with gross external and internal events, to subtler internal objects.

During disidentification, attention becomes subtle, and several movements may occur:

1. We fall asleep (attention becomes identified with states of sleep).
2. We become engaged with subtle sleep phenomenon as a dreamer, rather than remaining in the witnessing position.
3. We become alert and energized as we move from denser (gross) to more refined (subtle) levels of consciousness.
4. We realize ourselves as Awareness, in which all gross and subtle movements are arising.

Throughout the process of iRest various movements arise: thoughts, images, sounds, archetypal and symbolic images, memories, desires, and conditioned habits. As iRest deepens, suppressed feelings, thoughts, and emotions also rise from the unconscious.

It is unnecessary to intellectually analyze these movements. Analysis only causes the mind to become caught up in, and identified with these movements. Instead, we learn to recognize, meet, greet, welcome, listen to, and respond to these changing movements. Then, they dissolve naturally in the field of Awareness — like bubbles rising to the surface of a calm lake.

Knowing ourselves as Awareness helps break the bonds of attachment (*Sanskrit: raga*) and leads to the natural release of latent impressions (*Sanskrit: saṃskaras*) from consciousness. We learn to observe them without becoming overly identified with them.

We may feel frightened or uncomfortable with these movements, but as we learn to welcome them — without becoming involved — experiences transform. We learn to let them simply pass by as images on a movie screen.

### **Waking, Dreaming & Dreamless Sleep**

iRest is like deep sleep, during which the brain enters the states of dream and dreamless sleep. In the dreamless state, we are unaware of the stresses and conflicts that we experience during our waking state. In fact, during dreamless sleep, we are totally unaware that we have either a body or a mind.

In dreamless sleep, there is total disidentification from body and mind, including our sense of self. Yet we still exist. For when our body and mind reawaken we are conscious of having slept deeply.

During dreamless sleep, we rest in profound contentment. When we awaken, we often exclaim to others that we had a deep and restful sleep. In deep sleep, we rest in our Essential Nature that lies beyond all changing states. We remain here, dis-identified from stress and conflict. This is why we feel rested upon awakening.

Usually, in dreamless sleep we are unaware of the Essential Nature in which we rest. iRest teaches us how to remain consciously aware of our Essential Nature, even as the body-mind rests in the dreamless state.

The practice of iRest ultimately reawakens our natural ability to consciously live in and as Essential Nature even as we go about daily life. When we abide in our natural and innate qualities of Essential Nature, such as Being and Awareness, we experience the deep peace and contentment that is our birthright, even during life's travails.

### **Unchanging Joy and Well-Being**

Over-involvement with external and internal objects can distract us from recognizing Essential Nature — the ever-present

unchanging equanimity, joy, and well-being that underlies every changing state.

We experience a forefeeling of this unchanging joy when we obtain objects that we desire. The pleasure we experience during these occasions is a projection of our innate state of joy and well-being. iRest is a process that teaches us how to transcend our pre-occupation with objects so that we can experience our rightful heritage as joyful equanimity and realize our true spiritual nature and destiny.

iRest reveals our innate joy and well-being across all dimensions of our body and mind. It blends together practices of deep relaxation, breathing, one-pointed concentration, emotional and cognitive healing, disidentification with objects, and meditative inquiry that allows us to recognize our inherent ground of Being, Awareness, and Essential Nature. Together, these potent methods of meditation form a comprehensive approach to stress reduction, health, healing, well-being, and spiritual awakening.

### **Intentions**

An intention is a declaration, statement, or assertion that is set in present tense, and states a fact. Some people use the word 'affirmation' to describe this process, whereas iRest uses the term 'intention' (*Sanskrit: Sankalpa*).

Through the practice of intention, iRest accesses the deepest regions of the unconscious, where the mind is acutely sensitive to suggestion. These natural affirmations exert tremendous influence and serve as direct commands from the inner intelligence to the unconscious. Intentions can then re-emerge from the unconscious and actively manifest as conscious behaviors.

Through the process of iRest negative conditioning is re-patterned. And formerly destructive patterns, obsessions, fears, negative emotions, and cognitions are transformed.

iRest reveals that we are not helpless victims of unconscious instincts and conditioned patterns. Formerly negative habits — impulses and negative impressions — are harnessed to work for, rather than against us.

## The Body Sheaths

iRest acknowledges 1) seven dimensions of consciousness; 2) six sheaths (*Sanskrit: kosha*) of identification with changing movements of nature (*Sanskrit: prakṛti*); and 3) one dimension of unchanging Essential Nature (*Sanskrit: puruṣa*). (See Table 2).

**Table 2. The Six Sheaths of Identification**

Sheath	Dimension
Physical ( <i>Annamaya</i> )	Gross physical
Breath & Energy ( <i>Prāṇāmaya</i> )	Gross and Subtle Energetic
Feelings & Emotions ( <i>Manomaya</i> )	Opposites of Emotions
Cognitions ( <i>Vijñānamaya</i> )	Thoughts, Beliefs, Images, Memories
Joy, Bliss ( <i>Ānādamaya</i> )	Changing States of Joy
Ego-I & Witness ( <i>Asmitāmaya</i> )	Separative Ego-I or Witness
Essential Nature ( <i>Sahaj</i> )	Beyond All Changing States

The process of iRest is designed to familiarize us with the changing aspects of our body, mind, and senses. It then supports us in our ability to disidentify from the changing, so that we can recognize what about ourselves is unchanging.

As we grow familiar with what constitutes changing states of body, senses, emotions, mind, and world, we begin to disidentify from these movements. We break free of stresses and conflicts that prevent us from living a contented life. With undistracted attention, we are then free to recognize Essential Nature — the underlying source of true happiness, contentment, and peace that exists independent of all states of consciousness.

## Being-Awareness-Joy

As we move through the steps of iRest,

disidentification naturally occurs. For example, as attention rotates through the physical body, attention is released from focusing on sensation, and attention is freed to recognize fundamental qualities of Essential Nature such as Being (*Sanskrit: sat*), Awareness (*Sanskrit: chit*), and Joy (*Sanskrit: ānānda*).

Being-Awareness-Joy is innate and always present, although we are usually distracted by outer and inner events and thereby rarely recognize it for what it truly is. iRest reacquaints us with these expressions of Essential Nature so that we may recognize them throughout all states of consciousness.

When we don't agree with what life brings to our table, we struggle to change what is into what we wish it to be. This creates conflict and internal division. As a result, we feel tense, confused, and stressed.

By learning how to see things as they are, we can go beyond them. For example: rather than trying to avoid painful and uncomfortable situations, we learn to be aware of them. Rather than judging or trying to change them, we learn to accept them as they are, and recognize actions we need to take.

iRest charges us with three tasks: 1) to be constantly aware of the ever-changing phenomenon within and around us; 2) to recognize actions, we need to take as human beings that keep us in harmony with ourselves and the world around us; and 3) to realize qualities of Essential Nature such as Being and Awareness.

iRest asks that we not change anything. Rather, it invites us to observe our tendencies to make things into something other than what they are. Being with things as they are is a form of compassionate love. It allows us to see all sides of an issue with discriminative wisdom (*Sanskrit: viveka khyāti*) rather than judgmental criticism. This leads to right actions, which are in harmony with our deepest needs.

The ‘Three P’s’ of practice, patience, and persistence are the necessary ingredients for success in iRest. The mind needs time to relinquish excessive thinking, judgments, and attitudes to regain its native peaceful disposition. Our job is to settle into ‘being witnessing,’ and be with things as they are — sensations, emotions, and cognitions — and the actions we need to take.

Witnessing brings understanding. Understanding reveals right action. If we are in a building that’s on fire, we don’t hesitate to act. It’s only when we don’t know how to go beyond our problems that we can become bogged down and confused. Knowing how to go beyond awakens our inner resources of wisdom and insight, and liberates tremendous energy.

### **The Fire of Awareness**

Conditioning teaches us to judge experiences as either good or bad, and control them accordingly. But judging and controlling are movements born in conflict that stems from refusing what is. What we refuse is often repressed into the unconscious. And whatever lives in the unconscious will be projected out into the world. When we reject anger, we’ll project anger onto the world. When we are angry that we are being judged, or controlled, it is because we are judging and trying to control our own actions.

Embodying this understanding is powerfully transformative. When we shift from trying to change ourselves and the world around us, to being non-judgmentally aware, magic happens. For anything that is placed in Awareness transforms.

Awareness is like fire. Fire purifies, and Awareness purifies. Fire doesn’t judge. Awareness doesn’t judge. It simply burns away the impurities of what is placed within it.

During iRest we learn to rest and abide as the fire of Awareness. This is the action of welcoming all that is, founded on the insight

that trying to change what is always fails. When we rest as the fire of Awareness we cease trying to be different. We are open to the unknown, welcoming without goal or intention.

**Table 3. The steps of iRest**

Step 1	Intention
Step 2	Heartfelt Desire
Step 3	Inner Resource
Step 4	Welcome Physical Sensations
Step 5	Welcome Breath and Energy
Step 6	Welcome Opposites of Feelings & Emotion
Step 7	Welcome Opposites of Cognitions
Step 8	Welcome Joy, Equanimity
Step 9	Welcome Witness, Witnessing, I-thought, Being, Awareness
Step 10	Welcome Everything Just As It Is: Integration into the World

### **The Ten Steps of iRest**

*Integrative Restoration* ~ iRest restores our body, mind and senses to their natural functioning, gives rise to spontaneous disidentification from afflictive physical, emotional, cognitive conditioning, and supports us in awakening to Essential Nature.

iRest is a contemporary adaptation of classical Yoga Nidra found in India. In traditional variations of Yoga Nidra, practitioners are told what to see, feel, hear, sense, taste, smell, or think while practicing. We have discovered that Yoga Nidra is more powerful when it enables practitioners to uncover, experience, and explore their own unique feelings, thoughts, images, etc., rather than being told what to experience.

Many westerners do not relate to the term ‘yoga nidra.’ So, to make iRest secular and accessible to the greatest number of people, we have renamed our approach of Yoga Nidra, *Integrative Restoration*, or *iRest*.

When offering iRest within a group setting, the program supports people to inquire into their unique feelings, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, images, and archetypal symbols they

are working with. At appropriate moments during a group or individual practice, participants are invited to recognize what is spontaneously emerging within themselves. In this manner, iRest can be a highly individualized practice, even within a group setting.

The iRest protocol is not a linear progression of steps, although for purposes of learning it is often taught as a ten-step program. (See Table 3). iRest is a fluid approach, a roadmap of meditative self-inquiry that helps us traverse the path of health, healing, self-actualization, and awakening to Essential Nature.

As we learn the iRest protocol, we learn how to adapt it to increase its potency with ourselves, and individuals or groups we are working with. We meet ourselves and others as we would enter a stream or river. When we meet ourselves and others where we are, we begin with whatever step of iRest feels most appropriate to engage in the moment. This form of ‘stream entry’ enables the iRest protocol to be highly adaptable, depending upon the person and situation.

We never impose. Instead, we support practitioners, including ourselves, to inquire deeply into emerging feelings, emotions, thoughts, images, and symbols; and to move fluidly through the various steps of iRest.

iRest can be used in either a group or private setting. The benefit in working privately is that we can be on the ‘time schedule’ of the individual. We help them inquire, but have no need to travel onto the next step until integration at the particular step has unfolded in a supportive and productive manner.

Stream entry and working on an individual’s ‘time schedule’ is not always possible when working with groups, where everyone is proceeding at a different pace. With groups, we offer suggestions for participants to remain with emotions or beliefs, even as the rest of the participants continue. We then invite them to rejoin with the class

instructions, as they are ready.

At the end of iRest, we take time to integrate what we’ve experienced during meditation by walking back through the practice, re-experiencing our Intention, Heartfelt Desire, and the various beliefs, emotions and sensations we encountered during the practice. We then reorient to our body, mind, senses, and world, while feeling the spacious openness of undivided Awareness and Being. Finally, we move the body as we return to our alert state of wakefulness.

The 10-steps of iRest may be engaged as a ‘long form’, where the entire protocol, or various steps are engaged over a period lasting 30-60 minutes. iRest can also be engaged as a ‘short form,’ lasting 1 to 15 minutes or longer, during which time we take up one or more of the steps of iRest.

While initially, iRest is taught as a guided meditation, ultimately it is a self-paced program of self-inquiry. We are unique expressions of Essential Nature — facets of wholeness. As such, we are each operating on time schedules unique to ourselves. During iRest we savor our uniqueness, as we learn to tailor the program to suit the needs of ourselves, and of those who engage our support in learning the program.