

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hatelty

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hatelty

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hately.

Susi: Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here because today I have Anne Douglas. And Anne and I go way, way, way back and we've known each other for a long time. And she's one of the trainers inside of my certification program and she created the R&R Sleep Meditation certification that also exists within my certification program.

And today I wanted to bring her on because we have some spots opening up for the R&R sleep meditation that's available to the public, we just have a handful of them. And I wanted to give you a taste of one of the aspects of sleep meditation from the perspective of Anne and just give you a really interesting experience from an intellectual place about how this nidra practice works. And I mean it's more than a yoga nidra practice, and really dig into one of the most important concepts that exists inside of the practice, which is something we call the opposites.

So Anne and I are going to have this conversation today, I think you're really going to love it. The practice is so potent. The practice is so, I mean I hate to use the T word, but really it is transformational. It really is, but that word is thrown around so much, right? And so we're just going to have this chat today about this and then we'll give you some resources that you can explore some of the practice for yourself.

So welcome, Anne, I'm so glad that you're here.

Anne: Just a joy to be here, Susi. I just want to say I so appreciate your passion for yoga and yoga therapy. You bring it all the time and it's just such a joy to be in your presence of this passion that you have. And I share it too and it's just an honor to be in your company.

Susi: Awesome. Lovely. Well we're going to have fun because it's true, you get two people passionate about a topic and it gets very, very fun. So let's

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

first talk a bit about R&R sleep meditation just to give people a context for it for those who don't know you or don't know it or that.

Anne: Yeah, sure. I get to talk about my favorite subject. So R&R sleep meditation, rest and revitalization sleep meditation. We decided to call it sleep meditation rather than yoga nidra to put it in this category of meditation, put meditation right out there in the title, let's be clear, this is a meditation practice. And nidra in Sanskrit means sleep. So it's a sleep meditation practice in which you're surfing all the different brain wave states, as we do in sleep. Indeed we can surf different sleep stages and brain wave states in sleep.

So as much as sleep is deeply restorative, and we've got more and more science coming out around that, the same is true of yoga nidra and sleep meditation. It is highly restorative. We need sleep, and we can get what we get in sleep through yoga nidra.

But also with sleep meditation, we're also bringing in different practices that include hypnotherapy. So it's a hybrid healing practice that includes multiple pathways, eight different pathways, and draws upon teaching the philosophy of yoga, yoga nidra, meditation, hypnotherapy.

And I also am including NSDR, or non sleep deep rest teachings, which is a burgeoning path of yoga nidra coined NSDR by Dr. Andrew Huberman who teaches neurobiology at Stanford School of Medicine. And he's a great advocate for yoga nidra but he calls it NSDR.

So R&R sleep meditation is this great combination, fusion, of these different practices and the science and research that supports it. And rest and revitalization as the R&R because this is what we get out of the practice.

Susi: One of the key things that happens inside of the practice that I think really distinguishes it between when people ask, you know, how is this different than say, shavasana is yoga? Or other types of body scans or breath scans or things of that sort. One of the things I just find so powerful

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

is the concept of opposites. And so there's a point in the practice where the guide is asking someone to notice the opposites, can you kind of go through what that piece of it is to give context for this next part of our chat?

Anne: Yes, well the gist of yoga nidra is that we are opening to deeper and deeper layers of self-experiencing through what we call the koshas. Most people in their yoga teacher trainings learn about the koshas or the layers of experiencing from gross levels, sensation, to ever and ever subtler levels of energy, breath, emotions, thoughts and beliefs and bliss, and even the very, very, very subtle movements of the I thought.

And so when we are moving through these layers in the yoga nidra practice, we are learning to welcome all aspects of ourselves. And thereby we're integrating at every level. So those parts of ourselves that we've refused, whether it's memories, events, certain sensations we don't like, certain emotions we tend to refuse and only accept maybe a certain bandwidth of happiness.

In all of yoga nidra, but in particular in working with the opposites, we're learning to welcome all aspects of ourselves by way of sensation because all opposites are felt as sensation. And so if we think of the human experience, everything is experienced through opposites. We have right and left. We have top and bottom. We have warm and cool. We have up and down.

And I could go on; comfort/discomfort, heavy/light. And this is our body's way of giving us biofeedback from moment to moment to moment as to how we're doing. Am I okay now? How about now? How about now?

And so certain qualities of feelings are giving us information that I'm good. I'm good right now. And certain textures, densities give us the information that something is wrong, something is off, something is not right, however subtle or gross.

And so we can learn to receive these messages as whispers, catch the whispers – I think you use this term a lot, Susi, in your work, whispers. And

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

if we catch the whispers, then we can address the situation right away, whereas if we're kind of numbed out to our body or only welcoming a certain range or bandwidth of sensation, which is very common in the world, innocently, naively we just develop a conditioning or habits that cause us to only want joy or only want pleasure and then get conditioned into habits of refusing anything other than that.

And so thereby we're only living within a certain bandwidth of life and we start to feel that something is off or something is wrong when we're not meeting the fullness of life.

So when we just simply meet warm, cool, and that full continuum of sensation, we start to bring back the fullness of that range of sensation. We integrate all of the moments that had that full bandwidth of, in this case, body temperature and we're saying yes to it just by feeling it.

But what's unique about the yoga nidra practice, the sleep meditation practice, is that we've dropped down into these deeper brainwave states, at least the alpha brainwave state, where we're open, receptive, calm, relaxed. And then we start to feel warm, cool, heavy, light, comfort, discomfort, but from a place of self-regulation, from a place of calm.

And so in this way we're building integration and more resilience because we're developing a pattern, a habit, a new habit, let's say, of calm, steady ease that's kind of humming in the home ground of our being.

Susi: What I think is really pertinent, especially with the people that I work with and who listen to this podcast, is there are people who listen to this that are folks who have pain and they're seeking ways to get out of pain or reduce pain. And then there are the practitioners who work with them and those practitioners might be yoga teachers, yoga therapists, physical therapists, massage therapists, and they're integrating, they're wanting to integrate some of these concepts into their practices.

And I think what's so powerful about this as a stepping stone is that we know that the interpretation of the sensations that we will label pain

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

happens in the brain. And so that when we are interpreting those sensations as something to be fearful about or threatened by, then those sensations go up. And when we interpret those sensations as we have the support, we know what to do, we've got an inner locus of control, then they tend not to be as frightening. And so then the sensations actually go down.

And what I find really interesting is that I can have that conversation with people, and a lot of what I do helps people come into the state of ease, right? That's a fundamental piece. And so they're able to get into that space of recognition and the additive nature of the sleep meditation practice is it's a really easy way in, like what's hot, what's cold? It's not something like in your face, let's talk about your pain, right?

So it's an easier way in. It's a baby step of saying, what's heavy? What's light? Where's hot or cold? Or what's cool and what's warm? And just starting as we can feel those things. And then it just opens up our bandwidth of language for, oh, what's easeful and what's tight? What's painful and what's not?

And then what starts to happen, because a really important part of how I teach people is that wording that I just used of what's painful, what's not. And a lot of people initially, when they reduce pain, they're unable to name the not part. Like they'll say, yeah, there's not pain there anymore. And I say, well, what is there then? And it's when they can start to name it, which can sometimes be tricky for them. They're like, I don't know, it's just not there. I'm like, and what's that now?

So it starts to open them into what I call the gradient of sensation, right? And you talked about it as a spectrum, right? It starts to open you up. And I find that as this language, as this experience of more than just a state and then not that state opens up, then what starts to happen is there's a confidence that comes with a clarity of what someone can live in.

It's no longer about fixing themselves, but rather it's an experiencing of themselves, which funnily enough leads to change, but it's the sort of

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

change that doesn't have that fix it quality to it that really is more of a surface thing, yeah?

Anne: Exactly. Oh, there's so much that you say there, Susi. And when you say that, what I come to is this sense of as they're learning these words, thick, thin, warm, cool, that can be doorways into descriptors, the language of pain, or eventually the language of no pain. The language of bliss. The language of joy, eventually. Or even, yes, pain is here, but there's also it's opposite of no pain here.

And both can be present at once, but the mind tends to put its attention on the pain because it gets habituated into that innocently. But what we're learning as a result of developing this language of the body by naming these words, these descriptors is self-awareness, self-presence, and the capacity for that. Whereas previously, often what we find is the innocent incapacity for presence in pain, in suffering.

And so what we can learn as we meet pain, describe it, unpack it, learn how to meet it, welcome it by describing it, we bring in often a new component, which is compassion, kindness. If we're refusing something, it's hard for that to be there. But when we're allowing something to be there, and sometimes that allowing comes because we've come through the portal of its opposite.

So we feel it, we feel its opposite, and that opposite creates the doorway into meeting and welcoming it to the degree that we can or would like to. And then what we find is this genuine kindness or compassion arises for this suffering.

Susi: So what's so interesting here is it's coming in this space that you and I have both said in a different way. I used the word ease, you used the word calm. And I think something we haven't mentioned that needs to actually be mentioned is that we're not thinking through this.

And there's a distinction between thinking about the opposite and feeling the opposite. And the way in, I say this all the time and I find it sometimes

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

really interesting because when I really distill down the essence of what helps my people successfully get out of pain and stay out of pain, the key thing that's consistent amongst all of them is our ability to feel.

And yet people are not walking around saying, oh man, if I could just feel more, that is definitely the solution to my problem. There is nobody out there. Well, maybe there's people like you and me who have done enough of this that we're like, yeah, it would be great to kind of open up the gates on this because we now know, right?

But generally speaking, people are not walking around saying, man, if I could just feel more, I will feel better. And yet it really is, it's the gem. It's the gem that when people do feel more, because so many people are trying to think their way into a process of recovery, like, tell me what muscle I need to fix. Give me the solution. And can I think my way to it?

And I mean, I understand why that happens. And it's only one part of our brain and it turns out that it only gets us so far. So what we're doing here is playing around with what are you feeling?

And before we started recording, something I was mentioning to Anne, I said, what I think is so amazing about the opposites is we could say the word love, and what's the opposite? And I've actually done this in a group and we've had fear. We've had hate. We've had anger. We've had concern. We've had worry. What other words have shown up as opposites to love?

Anne: Sad, discontent, frustrated, angry. I can't get it right.

Susi: And the thing is, it's unique. The word that each person chooses is unique. So there's no doing the practice wrong. It's a revelatory practice for yourself. And as you grow this ability to feel into what those opposites are for you, that's really where the magic of this starts to – I mean it's magical, but we have so much science behind the magic. But it really is what opens us to some really profound healing.

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

One of the pieces I think is really interesting in the practice too, is one of the basic ones is like we'll talk about like cool and warm, we'll just use those two, or heavy and light, really simple ones. And just take a moment as you're listening to this, and if it's warm, feel where you feel warm. And notice where in your body you're feeling warm. And then notice in your body where you're feeling cool.

And then go back and forth between warm and cool. And then the next instruction is, can you actually be with both? And this isn't a thinking thing. You can't think your way into this. Can you feel both? And then when you're feeling both at once, what happens?

And I think, Anne, what's so cool with this is that we've got these two opposites that you're feeling at the same time and something happens. It's like there's this opening. There's this, I don't know, can you describe more of it? There's just this opening that occurs, which you can't experience thinking your way through it. So unpack that one a bit.

Anne: Yeah, definitely. And I do want to say that there's two things happening in this practice of opposites, in the literal practice of opposites in sleep meditation. Firstly, when you're moving between one and the other, we're engaging what we call deconstructive interference, which is a term out of wave mechanics where by going from one and then the other, they actually cancel each other out.

So that's one effect that has a physiological impact on the body, where we're actually changing the sensations by neutralizing them by going back and forth with the opposites.

Then, as we go to the feeling both at once, our binary brain, our brain that has two lobes, experiences duality, in opposites. This is why you find opposites around the world. No matter what the culture, no matter what the philosophy, no matter what the religion, no matter what the time in history, you will find reference to opposites because it has to do with our binary brain and how the system works and causes us to perceive the world.

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

So opposites are. They just are. And so the brain, when it's trying to orient, it's looking at this or that. It's perceiving one or the other. So it's natural at first, when we make the invitation to feel both at once, at first the mind will go, okay, well, warm. Yep, there's warm. And cool. Okay, there's cool. Both at once? And so the mind at first kind of does a back, forth, back, forth, and goes, what? And then it gives up, because the mind can only orient to one or the other, because that's what it does. That's how it works.

And so there's ways that we can assist in the instruction. As we invite you to feel both at once, we can say something like widening the lens of your feeling awareness. It's not a thinking inquiry, it's a feeling inquiry. And we can say things like, it's no longer warm and cool, something else.

So we're just kind of dropping little seeds, clues in this magic, as you call it, or mystery, to help them find their way. Because the mind just really wants to know. The mind likes to take a task and get her done. And so we're helping it along. We're giving it a little boost with these clues.

But ultimately, what's happening is, as we open to not two, not duality, but one, we're opening to non dual awareness. So as we widen the aperture, it's like opening from a focused camera lens into a full aperture, wide lens view. So now, instead of warm, say in the core and cool at the periphery, now we're feeling center and periphery at once. We've got this wide lens experience, not just view but actual sensation and direct visceral experience.

Now we are in a non dual state, if you will, or non dual perceiving. In non dual consciousness, the mind stops. I mean, the natural functions still carry on. The brain is still doing its job, but the thinking mind stills very efficiently.

And listeners now if you, just in this moment, feel both center and periphery of your body, maybe even around your body. Not just the internal body, but the surface of your body and the space just outside of your body, feel all that at once. And just notice how quiet the mind gets, and how calm your nervous system gets. Super efficient form of meditation by inviting opposites, alternately to begin with.

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

And then, we're opening to duality and how that neutralizes. And then we're opening to non duality and how that utterly integrates our being, because now there is no opposite, there is no separation, there is no refusal. And as Susi says, there's no thinking. We're not having to think our way through it.

This is not a psychological exercise or psychological therapy. This is just a simple inquiry that brings us into immediate wholeness, simply by feeling both opposites, regardless of what they are at once.

Susi: So I've made mention of how this kind of practice has benefited my clientele who are in the process of reducing and or eradicating physical pain. And I know that I'll sometimes take to the practice when I've been overthinking something. And I can now feel in my body when I'm overthinking something. And it's like, okay, I need to step away, right?

It's like, sometimes I'm just looking at the computer screen, I can't put two words together, I'm chewing around on something. And it's just there's a certain sort of sensation in my body. It's like, oh, oh, okay, this is why the combination is not working. And I'll step back. And starting the practice there's an intention aspect of it, like what's the intention that you want from the practice.

And we can go into more depth at another time, but I'll often set the intention of like, it could be that I just don't want to be thinking anymore. Or it might be, I want to suspend thought, or it might be the solution that I'm actually seeking for the problem that I'm trying to solve. And I'll put that into the intention.

And then as I go through the practice and I'm not thinking at all about said problem or whatever the intention was, I'm just going about doing the practice. Practice continues, I'm down regulating, I'm relaxing, I'm getting to that place of ease and calm.

And then as we get into this opposite and we're moving back and forth, and I remember following one of your practices once and I remember it was so cool because we were in the suspension phase of like, okay, so now now

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

feeling into both feeling into both. And you said, now bring back your intention. And all of a sudden, the answer came to me. And it was one of those like poof, it's like the clouds parted and voila, right?

And I love that because it's like the amount of work is so little, right. And so often when we can be in those thinking problem solving places, it's kind of like when my kids lose something, and I say just stop looking for it and it will show up. If it wants to find you, it will show up. And then lo and behold they'll stop looking for it and a moment, a few moments later, whoa, there's the toy, right?

And so it's something that the harder you work at something, in some cases, the harder it is to come to the solution that's actually there.

Anne: That's so true.

Susi: Yeah.

Anne: Because we're using only a small aspect of our capacity when we're problem solving from our cognitive centers. When we drop down into deeper brainwave states, into yoga nidra, when we're even just in alpha brain wave state, that early stage of calm and ease. And actually, in yoga nidra we're opening into gamma brainwave states that are high amplitude brain waves that offer profound insight.

And so when we kind of drop down and that facilitator's voice kind of gets whispery and off in the distance and it may not even make sense. But that's a good sign because that indicates that our cognitive beta waking state problem solver is offline. It's a good thing at times, but in yoga nidra we want it to go offline because now, in the depths of the practice, we have full access to every part of not just our body mind, but our spirit.

And yoga nidra is, yes, an efficacious healing practice with good science behind it. But it also is a spiritual practice that opens up receptivity to realms that we haven't learned about yet. It's spoken of in the deeper teachings, and this is how we know about it.

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

So when we are in the fullness of the yoga nidra practice, out of the mystery comes some profound insight that, shazam, no amount of thinking and problem solving and pros and cons and all the tools that we have about strategic planning can bring to the table for us.

So when we open to this – And I just love that you shared this story, Susi, because it really exemplifies how not just in certain aspects of our lives can this benefit us. But in all aspects of our lives. In relationship problem solving. Even if something is off and we don't even know what it is, the tendency, just because of the nature of our current culture is to problem solve, the invitation in sleep meditation is to go into the silence. Go into your very wholeness, in the timeless now that includes your future where the problem is already solved.

There's another opposite, the future could be an opposite. But this future is already in the timeless now. Let's access that and bring that into the present moment. And we have access to all these beautiful tools that we can't even think of right in this red hot moment in the fullness of yoga nidra.

Susi: So good. So good. So where this can really be of benefit, as I first mentioned, with a lot of my clientele who are looking to reduce and eradicate physical pain. And then I've just mentioned problem solving for my own self that didn't have to do anything with a movement thing. It was a cognitive function and what it felt like to be almost cognitively too loaded up and not being able to come to a solution. And Anne has also mentioned relationships.

I mean, really any time that we're like, you're just sort of stuck. I remember doing these kinds of practices even after my kids were born. And when you're a new mom, you're not sleeping much, right? You're up a lot. And so I would laugh when I would read all these stories about how much sleep one should get. I'm like, oh, these guys are not talking to new moms, right? And yet doing the practices of sleep meditation enabled me to catch up, so to speak, right.

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

They can be very powerful for folks who need a restful state and a restful space if they're not getting it in the nighttime. So it can be super helpful there. And going through the opposites, again, can be a really powerful opportunity just to inquire more into contributing and correlating factors that might not be in your conscious awareness, yeah?

Anne: Exactly. Well said. It brings to mind that there is this aspect of the R&R sleep meditation called the healing dialogue, where we actually dialogue with whatever symptomology is going on in our body. We perceive the symptomology as a messenger that's here to deliver a message. And what we can find is that, in dialoguing with the pain or symptoms or a diagnosis, we can find that we're living in one end of the spectrum or continuum of the symptomology.

And as we start to dialogue with the other end, and you bring up sleep problems or let's say insomnia, so we can actually start dialoguing both with insomnia and sleepfulness. And they can have a conversation together. There's all sorts of ways in this aspect of the practice where we can open to opposites and heal, use it as a healing tool.

Susi: So good. So good. If you're listening to this and this is becoming interesting to you and you're a new listener of the podcast, or you've been listening to this for a while, I did an R&R sleep meditation on a previous episode, and we'll put that episode number in the show notes so you can easily access that link and you can follow along with me.

And, Anne, you're on one of the platforms, which platform are you on where a number of your meditations exist?

Anne: Yeah, I'm on a number of platforms, but the one that has the most is the Simple Habit app. You can find it on Google Play or Apple, over 4 million listens.

Susi: And that one, you're doing a variety of different types of meditations on that one?

Ep #230: R&R Sleep Meditation with Anne Douglas

Anne: Yeah, all sorts of meditations. A lot of them are around sleep just because it seems to be one of the most dominant malaise out there these days, but also depression, also pain.

Susi: We also have a 10 day R&R sleep meditation reset. And if you want to dig into that, you can find that at functionalsynergy.com/reset. So there's a number of different ways in. If you want to grab it on a podcast, if you want to follow Anne on the Simple Habit app, or if you want to go right into the sleep meditation reset, then you can access that as well.

And if you want to go further into the certification of this, then just send me an email over at health@functionalsynergy.com, and we can have a conversation about that.

Other than that, Anne, what's a great way for people to get in touch with you if they want to connect with you or do some work with you? What's the greatest way to reach you?

Anne: Yep, you can just send me an email at annied@telusplanet.net. Annied, A-N-N-I-E-D, @telusplanet.net.

Susi: Awesome. So we'll have all of those in the show notes so you can find what is specifically resonating with you. Anne, thank you so much. This has been so much fun.

Anne: A joy. Always a pleasure, Susi.