

## Yoga for Grief Relief

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Grief is our response to loss. Until recently, most of the studies concerning grief refer to the emotions and psychological processes experienced after the loss of a dear one due to death. Grief is a reaction that also involves the body; a complex response integrated in the Lymbic System, deep within the brain. After an initial state of shock, a grieving individual might experience apathy, confusion, fear and an intense feeling of sadness. Physically, we experience a reduction of the levels of energy, physical pain (specially in the mid back and the pectoral muscles) and an alteration of the regular circadian rhythms (specifically the breathing, circulatory and sleeping patterns.)

The mind and the body react with grief to the loss of a pet, a job, a train, a dream or youth. Since new grief triggers old grief, every time we face a new loss, we are confronted with the grief related to previous losses, not just in our life, but also the grief we carry as a species. In all cases, the central point is that we don't grieve that which we are not attached to. In that sense, in order to grieve something or someone we need to have developed a strong emotional bond or attachment.

Rather than 'getting over it', grief can ultimately be transformed into a deep source of self-knowledge and fuel for change. The Yoga for Grief Relief Sadhana I've integrated presents five sections that aid the transformation of Grief: **Pranayama, Asana, Shatkarma, Relax and Sankalpa.**

- Pranayama helps bring back a sense of control to the individual by manipulating the prana or vital force to help unite the gap between the conscious and the unconscious.
- Asana serves to physically manage body symptoms of grief particularly addressing the pain.
- Shatkarma in the form of Tratak, helps reset the pituitary gland affecting the flight or fight response, which plays an important role in the grief reaction, and the feelings associated.
- Relax is included with the intention of diminishing the stress levels that increase when in grief.
- And finally, Sankalpa, the powerful yogic principle of resolve, helps reset the brain and focus the mind towards the manifestation of the new reality.

The aim of this practice is to help individuals accept the reality of the loss and then work through the pain of grief. Once the individual can adjust to the new situation or environment, then he can emotionally reinvest the Love attached to the lost person or situation and move on with life.