

Adobe Captivate, E-learning Script: Learn Dirga Pranayama with Cindy Spires Malerba, MA, RYT

(This e-learning module was created in Adobe Captivate. Here is a [review link](#) to the Captivate module, but you will have to have an Adobe account in order to review it. As a backup, I have created a screenshare of the Captivate module, which is linked [here](#) for your convenience as well).

Slide 1:

Hi. My name is Cindy Spires Malerba. I have been teaching yoga for over 12 years, including instructing people on stress relief strategies using pranayama, which are commonly understood as breathing techniques. I have taught yoga workshops on this topic in academic settings, and I have incorporated these lessons into public and private yoga classes. I hope you learn something new and can use this information to help you in your daily life whenever you encounter stressful situations.

To make this presentation accessible, I will provide a transcript to accompany the module, and I will read each slide's text aloud so that all learners can benefit from the practice.

Let's get started by clicking on the Let's Begin button.

Slide 2: Before we get started, let's set up your space.

Take 5-10 minutes to arrange your space so that you are comfortable either seated or lying down.

- Perhaps you arrange pillows or a lay a yoga mat on the floor.
- Perhaps you arrange a spot for yourself on your couch or on an office chair.
- Perhaps you go outside to sit on your porch so you can feel the breeze and sun on your face.

Please also grab a pen and paper, and have it ready nearby. Taking notes or journaling helps us remember new concepts and eases recall later. I will periodically encourage you to jot things down.

Keep in mind that if you feel like you need to change your positioning at any time during this lesson, you are welcome to do so. Just pause and restart when ready.

Lastly, have your phone and other devices on silent or do not disturb, but you will need a timer to practice a little later.

When you retrieve the phone and turn on the timer, please try to resist the urge to look anywhere else on your phone. You can also use a stop watch or a meditation app, like Insight Timer, if you already have one on your phone. Stay focused as best as you can, and always give yourself grace when you can't.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 3:

Goals for Today's Practice.

We will cover the Theory and Practice of Dirga Pranayama for stress relief. During the module, we will do the following:

1. We will learn the basic definition and principles of pranayama (breathing technique), pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), and dharana (concentration) in the context of yoga traditions.
2. We will learn the basic practice of dirga pranayama (three-part breath), and practice it several times for up to 3 minutes.
3. We will learn the basic practice of pairing pratyahara and dharana with dirga pranayama in order to achieve stress relief.
4. We will have time to explore, reflect, and relate this practice to your individual life.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 4:

Let's consider Your Personal Knowledge Toolbox.

What do you already know about the following topics?

- Breathing
- Yoga
- Focus & Concentration
- Distractions
- Stress
- Stress Relief

Take about 5-10 minutes to jot down some thoughts about what you know about each of these concepts. Understanding your existing knowledge on these topics will help you build new knowledge and make connections based on today's lesson.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 5:

Pranayama.

What is it and why do we practice it?

- According to T.K.V. Desikachar (1995), in his book, *The Heart of Yoga*, Pranayama is translated as "stretching or extending [sic]...that which is infinitely everywhere." (p. 54). When we break down the translation, the word prana is the part that is "infinitely

everywhere” and yama, in this case, refers to “stretching or extending.” The easiest comparison to Prana might be likening it to energy or vitality.

- Desikachar (1995) further writes that when a person is content and feeling well, there is more prana inside the body; when a person is more distraught or disturbed, the prana is lost outside of the body (p. 55).
- He writes, "What happens in the mind influences the breath; the breath becomes quicker when we are excited, and deeper and quieter when we relax. In order to influence our prana, we must be able to influence the mind. Through daily pranayama practice, we reverse this process, as a change in the breathing pattern influences the mind" (Desikachar, 1995, p. 55).
- So all of that is to say **that we** practice pranayama to regain a positive stasis in our bodies by reclaiming prana or vitality.
- Some examples of pranayama are dirga pranayama which is the three-part breath we will learn today; ujjayi pranayama, which is the low throat breath typically instructed in yoga classes; and nadi shodhana, which is the alternate nostril breath.
- Pranayama is one of the eight limbs of yoga, which also includes asana (physical poses), yama (how we relate to others/ our ethics), niyama (how we relate inwardly to ourselves), pratyahara (withdrawing from the stimulation of the senses), dharana (one-pointed focus), dhyana (connection made with the point of focus), and samadhi (merging with the point of focus, with multiple levels from there: samyama and kaivalya) (Desikachar, 1995, p. 107-111).

I highly recommend you read T.K.V. Desikachar's book, *The Heart of Yoga*, because it is an amazing resource for accurate interpretation of yogic texts and practices.

Do you know any other types of breathing techniques? Grab your pen and paper and write them down.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 6:

Pratyahara and Dharana

What are they and why do we practice them?

- According to TKV Desikachar (1995), Pratyahara is defined as "to withdraw oneself from that which nourishes the senses...In pratyahara, we sever [the] link between mind and senses, and the senses withdraw. In pratyahara, it is as if things are spread out with all their attractions before our senses, but they are ignored; the senses remain unmoved and uninfluenced" (p. 107-108).
- In practical terms, pratyahara is our deliberate cutting off of our senses, like closing our eyes to cut off visual stimulation or wearing noise cancelling headphones to cut off sound.

- Dharana, according to TKV Desikachar's (1995) definition, is "holding the concentration or focus of attention in one direction....We create the conditions for the mind to focus its attention in one direction instead of going out in many different directions. Dharana is therefore the condition in which the mind focuses and concentrates exclusively on one point. This one point can be anything at all, but it is always just a single object" (p. 109).
- Depending on the practitioner's ability to remain focused, one might make a deeper connection to the object of focus in dhyana (Desikachar, 1995, p. 109).
- In practical terms for our activity today, we are going to focus on withdrawing the senses and establishing a focus on the breath itself.

Do you know any other types of concentration or focusing techniques? Grab your pen and paper and write them down.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 7:

Dirga Pranayama

What is it and why do we practice it?

- Dirga Pranayama is a 3-part breath that is focused in the nostrils on the inhale and exhale.
- The three parts are your low belly or abdomen, your middle belly, and your chest as you direct the diaphragm to expand and contract.
- Dirga Pranayama involves a body-mind connection and is easy to practice with pratyahara and dharana since it takes concentration to keep the three parts in sync.

I originally learned dirga pranayama in public yoga classes.

Have you ever practiced dirga pranayama or another pranayama? Or, have you practiced a breathing technique that wasn't associated with yoga? If so, where and what? What was your experience?

Jot down some notes on paper to keep track of your experience as we continue building our understanding of these concepts. It's important to make connections between this practice and what you already know.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 8:

Practicing Dirga Pranayama

Now, I will walk you through a demonstration of the basic principles and practice of dirga pranayama paired with an integrated practice of pratyahara and dharana.

After the demonstration will be a period of silence for approximately 3 minutes, during which time you will be practicing dirga pranayama on your own.

Once I conclude this demonstration, you will have a chance to practice again on your own with just my written words as reminders for the practice.

A full transcript of this audio demonstration will be provided separately.

Let's get started.

Get comfortable in your chosen seat. If you're in a chair, go ahead and do a few circles with your shoulders forward and back, and do a few neck rolls both directions, to make sure you release any existing tension in your neck and shoulders; then, bring both feet to the floor and sit up straight in your chair while trying not to bring tension into your body; feel the chair supporting you.

If you're lying down, roll your head and neck side to side, bringing one cheek to the floor and then the other; if you need to prop your knees up on a few pillows, that can ease any low-back tension. Feel your body supported by the ground.

When you're settled, come to stillness.

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale it audibly through your mouth. Do that two more times. [pause for breaths] Then shift your breath into your nose on the inhales and exhales, noticing what your body is automatically doing as you begin the process of shifting your awareness to your breath and the control you are taking over what is otherwise an automatic process. Take five full inhales and exhales here through the nose, just feeling your belly and chest rising and falling with each breath. [pause for breaths]

Now, bring your attention to your lower belly and abdomen—the place just below your belly button. On your next inhale, and with deliberation, expand your lower belly out and away from you; on your exhale, with deliberation, bring your lower belly back toward your spine. Take three full rounds of breath here just trying to focus on the lower belly expanding and contracting with the breath. [pause for breaths]

You will notice that it is challenging to isolate each area away from its adjoining area, and that is okay. Just do your best to feel the targeted area of your body.

Now, bring your attention to your middle belly—the place right around your belly button and lower rib cage. On your next inhale, and with deliberation, expand your middle belly out and away from you; on your exhale, with deliberation, bring your middle belly back toward your spine. Take three full rounds of breath here just trying to focus on the middle belly expanding and contracting with the breath. [pause for breaths]

Now, bring your attention to your upper chest—the place that is around your heart and lungs, and below your shoulders. On your next inhale, and with deliberation, expand your upper chest out and away from you, including feeling your rib cage expanding sideways toward both of your arms; on your exhale, with deliberation, bring your expanded chest and lungs back toward your spine. Take three full rounds of breath here just trying to focus on the upper chest expanding and contracting with the breath. [pause for breaths]

Now, we will merge these three parts together for dirga pranayama: the lower belly, the middle belly, and the upper chest. As you inhale, first begin in the lower belly and slowly expand the belly away from you; as you continue with your inhale, fill the middle belly, and then the chest. We fill from the bottom to the top. When you are completely full of air, pause for a moment, and then slowly release the air first from your chest, then from the middle belly, and lastly from your lower belly. At the bottom when you are completely empty, pause again for a moment. We empty from the top to the bottom with brief pauses, like punctuation marks on our inhales and exhales. Dirga pranayama is filling from the bottom to the top and emptying from the top to the bottom. Take three full rounds of breath practicing dirga pranayama. [pause for breaths]

As you continue breathing in this way, imagine your breath is like a slowly undulating wave that starts at your lower belly, continues moving up through your middle belly, and ends at your chest when your lungs are completely full. Then, visualize the wave moving back down, in a slow ripple, from your chest, to your middle belly, and then to your lower belly.

As you continue practicing dirga pranayama, you will notice that your mind may begin to wander away from the attention you have given to the pairing of your breath and the physical movements of your body. In these moments, try not to become agitated or disappointed; instead, acknowledge the thought for whatever it is, without judgment. For instance, you might say silently to yourself, “I am thinking about lunch.” Then, without a positive or negative association with it, I want to encourage you to visualize that thought as an item and place it, in your mind’s eye, on a little boat, that on your next exhale, you slowly push out to sea on that wave of your breath. In this way, you can bring your attention back to the breath and to your sustained focus on it.

For the next three minutes, I want you to practice dirga pranayama in silence. As you proceed, try to lengthen the inhales and exhales to be a little longer. At the end of those three minutes, I will gently bring you back into awareness with my voice.

To begin, close your eyes if they aren’t already, shift your breath into your nose, and find the three-part breath that is dirga pranayama. Let’s begin.

[3-minute timer]

Slowly bring your awareness back into the room you are in and into your body as a whole. With your eyes still closed, let’s take a deep long breath through your nose, and then open your mouth and exhale audibly through your mouth. Let’s do that two more times. [pause for

breaths] Now a few more neck and shoulder rolls if that feels right for you, or a full body stretch if you're lying on the floor, and open your eyes when you're ready.

You did a great job. Be proud of yourself. This is not an easy practice.

This is the end of the audio demonstration. Take a few minutes for a break if you feel like you need it.

Click the button below to continue when you are ready.

Slide 9:

Now it's time for a Self-guided Practice of Dirga Pranayama for 3 Minutes

Remember the following steps:

- Nostril breathing.
- Three-part breath: filling from the bottom to the top and emptying from the top to the bottom (the wave-like motion).
- Lengthening the inhales and exhales as you proceed.
- Withdrawing your senses away from distractions (by closing the eyes and using noise cancelling headphones if you have them) and focusing your mind on your breath and your body as it moves; then sustaining your concentration there.
- Acknowledge when your mind becomes distracted and bring your focus and concentration back onto your breath and body moving together with each inhale and exhale.
- Make sure you keep tension out of your body and if you notice you are holding your neck and shoulders stiffly or gritting your teeth, just acknowledge your moment of realization of that, and then release the tension in your body.
- Remember the visualization of the boat on the water that you can place mental objects onto—let your exhale carry those thoughts away without judging the thoughts as positive or negative. If it comes back again and again, put it calmly on the boat and let the next exhale carry it out to sea.

Grab your timer and set it for 3 minutes.

You're going to do really well. I believe in you.

Click the button below after you have practiced at least once, and when you are ready to proceed.

Slide 10:

Self-Reflection.

Please take out your pen and paper, and answer the following questions in complete sentences:

- How did nostril breathing feel to you in your body?
- How easy or difficult was it to practice the three-part breath (dirga pranayama) on both the inhales and the exhales?
- Were you able to lengthen the inhales and exhales from start to finish?
- How easy or difficult was it to withdraw your senses as you focused your mind on your breath and body and then sustained your concentration there?
- What were some of the things that surfaced in your mind as you were practicing dirga pranayama and pratyahara/dharana?
- How successful were you at refocusing your mind on your breath and body when it wandered?
- How can you envision yourself using dirga pranayama, pratyahara, and dharana for stress relief in your life? Are there certain scenarios that you feel it would work best for you?

I want you to know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, only the communication of your direct, lived experience with the practice of dirga pranayama as it was paired with pratyahara and dharana. Each person's experience is unique to him, her, or them, and the most important thing to consider is how you will use this new skill for your own personal benefit as you continue practicing it.

Click the button below when you are ready to proceed.

Slide 11:

Dirga Pranayama in the Real World

This practice will help you anytime you need to focus, concentrate, and calm yourself, including before tests, before procedures, before social interactions, and in many other scenarios.

Practice in quiet **and** busy spaces to build up your resilience to distractions in order to reflect those real-world scenarios where chaos is happening but you need to calm yourself down.

Practice for 3-5 minutes in a variety of spaces, and see what happens!

One my favorite quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita* comes from Chapter 2, Stanza 40:

"On this path no effort is wasted,
no gain is ever reversed;
even a little of this practice
will shelter you from great sorrow."

I believe and know this because I have personally lived the benefits of using pranayama for stress relief. I sincerely hope this helps you as well.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 12:

Knowledge Check.

Please answer a few questions on Google Forms to help me verify what you have learned.

The Knowledge Check Link is provided below.

All of your answers will be kept confidentially, and your honest responses will help me make improvements to this learning module.

Thank you for learning to practice dirga pranayama for stress relief with me!

All my best to you as you learn and grow in this practice.

Cindy Spires Malerba, MA, RYT

You can email me at malerba@purdue.edu, or visit my website at www.clearmooncreative.com.

Click the button below to continue.

Slide 13:

References.

Desikachar, T.K.V. (1995). The heart of yoga: Developing a personal practice. Inner Traditions International.

The Bhagavad Gita (S. Mitchell, Trans.; 1st ed.). (2000). Three Rivers Press.

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