

Therapeutic yoga for optimum sleep

Guest: Dr Arielle Schwartz

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[00:00:10] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone, to this interview, where I'm super excited to be talking with a good friend of mine, Dr Arielle Schwartz.

And we're going to be talking about therapeutic yoga and how it can help with downregulating our nervous system. And, of course, as we've talked about in many interviews in this conference, we know that that can have a significant impact on our sleep.

Let me say a few words about Arielle. Arielle Schwartz, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist, certified complex trauma professional, and Kripalu yoga teacher with a private practice in Boulder, Colorado. As an internationally sought out teacher and leading voice in the healing of PTSD and complex trauma, she's the author of six books, including *The Complex PTSD Workbook*, *Therapeutic Yoga for Trauma* and *The Post Traumatic Growth Guidebook*.

She is dedicated to offering informational, mental health and wellness updates through her writing, public speaking, social media presence, and blog. She believes that the journey of trauma recovery is an awakening of the spiritual heart.

So, welcome, Arielle. It's lovely to have you back on one of our events. I always enjoy the time we have together.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yes. Likewise, Alex. It's such a joy to speak with you.

Alex Howard

So we're going to start with therapeutic yoga and the impact that it can have in helping to downregulate and settle the nervous system, to really then help ease of sleep, but also depth of sleep.

So do you want to say a few words to open around just what therapeutic yoga is in difference to yoga more generally, and then we'll go from there?

[00:01:55] Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, I'm happy to. I think the first thing I just want to name is that there's a lot of different approaches to therapeutic yoga. At times, what we're working with is, as you said, that downregulation and that ability to deeply rest and restore the nervous system. And specifically for me, my approach to therapeutic yoga, because I apply it for trauma recovery, I have a pretty broad reach when it comes to the autonomic nervous system, a broader touch to the nervous system.

In the sense that there's both upregulating and downregulating interventions or practices. Because in part, when we have been keyed up and stuck in that hyperarousal state for extended periods of time, it's good to have mobilization strategies to unwind the body and to actually get in touch with the tension that we're holding before we immediately go into those downregulating or relaxing practices.

What I also find beneficial is that because some individuals with trauma have more of a collapse in their system, more of that hypoarousal or dorsal vagal, if we look at it from a polyvagal lens, more of that quality of being shut down in a faint response where their body doesn't differentiate between rest and collapse.

And so moving towards mobilization before we go into restful or restorative practices can sometimes kind of bring in enough awareness of body and mind to help that differentiation process start to come in.

Alex Howard

And I think that's an important point because often people think with yoga, my favorite posture is shavasana, I'm just going to own that. But I think often people think about yoga as being the practice of just creating rest. And I love the point that you're making that there has to be that often movement first to then be able to have that settling right.

But I guess the form of that movement is important because often when we have trauma, one of the things that happens is that we approach the world from our lens of trauma, which means exercise can be a way of doing too much too, as opposed to working in harmony with.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

It's so true. And I think that as we're attending to, I would say that the baseline of therapeutic yoga is slowing down enough at the beginning to really get to know what is the state of my mind? What is the emotional tone that I'm bringing into the practice with me? How is the state of my energy, how is my breathing today? What am I noticing physically?

And as we bring all of that awareness in, that allows us to actually fine tune the whole practice so that it's not an overriding of your system as you just spoke to, where I'm pushing or aggressively approaching the practice in a way that mimics maybe what we do out in the world.

Alex Howard

So let's broaden this a little bit to bring in, I know you do a lot of work with toning the vagus nerve and I think that's a good way of bridging some of the practice elements with actually impacting on the nervous system.

[00:05:20] Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, and so often in the therapeutic yoga that I teach, we start with vagal toning practices. And those practices are, again, they're not always downregulating. I think sometimes there's this misunderstanding that when we're toning the vagus nerve that we're always creating a rest and digest or restorative response. Actually what our vagus nerve does is it helps create an open communication, or that communication highway between body and brain.

And most of that communication via the vagus nerve goes from the body to your brain. And so what we're doing when we tone the vagus nerve is that we're building more nervous system flexibility, we're building more vagal efficiency. And that allows us to actually have that healthy rhythmic oscillation that we think of as the testament of health of the autonomic nervous system, where every inhale we actually are accessing just a little sympathetic and every exhale we're getting a little parasympathetic.

And that as we're reclaiming nervous system flexibility to move between these states, that then we can also mobilize when we need to mobilize and deeply rest when we need to rest. So, examples of vagal toning practices include working with self touch and where the vagus nerve comes up close to the surface of the face. So there's pressure points in the face and in the ears where you can work with self massage.

You're seeing me do a little bit of it here to really key in and wake up those communications. The vagus nerve travels into the inner ear, so in yoga we have a practice called Bhramari Pranayama which is a humming practice that is also stimulating where the vagus nerve passes in through the throat at the larynx and pharynx. So we can stimulate through a little bit of that vibration and toning of sound.

And probably the most effective vagal toning practice is working with your breath and whether that's rhythmic breathing so that we have an even inhale and exhalation or even really emphasizing a long slow exhalation to key in that indeed it is safe to relax now.

Alex Howard

One of the things that I find very interesting with the large body of research that's been happening in recent times around the vagus nerve is that it's in a sense given us the scientific explanation for things that practices such as yoga have known for many, many years and have actually had practices available for for many years

I think it's quite interesting that what we need to do to help bring more flexibility, we already know. We just now have the explanation of why it's so effective.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, you're reminding me of another ancient practice that now has a lot of scientific validation which is that forever there has been something called eye yoga and in eye yoga we're really stretching around the muscles of the eyes and you'll feel some of that in your actual face. But we're also getting into the occiput of where those muscles connect down into the base of the skull.

And when we come into eye yoga and you can bring your eyes all the way to the right and all the way to the left and up and down and close and far but there's this connection between our eyes and our heart, it's called oculocardiac resonance, in which changes happening in the eyes are going to create

changes in that vagal tone as well. And so we can integrate that. And yoga has done this forever. Like drishti, being able to focus your eyes or going into a twist and taking your eyes all the way around behind you.

[00:09:19]

Feldenkrais integrates this beautifully as well where you're working with eye movements, and head and neck movements, to facilitate that relaxation in some of those chronic places where we hold tension. In the jaw, in the neck, in our shoulders. So really beautiful ways to access more sense of control. And I don't mean that in an aggressive sense but like oh, I actually have more choice about which muscles I'm engaging when I'm engaging them and to let go of that engagement. So I'm not walking around with that chronic tension.

Alex Howard

And in a sense what you're speaking to there, and a lot of what is really the outcome of this work, is being able to more deeply let go in ourselves. But of course part of the challenge can be the reason why we've learned to hold on is because of traumas and experiences that have been a threat or have been a challenge to our system.

And so sometimes what happens when people start to do these kinds of practices, and I'm sure in a little bit we'll get to things like meditation and yoga nidra and so on, is that they start to bump up against those places and I guess that's where particularly your work from a trauma informed perspective is so important here.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, you're speaking to this quality of where the body keeps the score or the body bears the burden of trauma and that very often the somatic armouring that we've built around ourselves to protect ourselves from vulnerable emotions and even vulnerable memories that we haven't had the support yet to process, well, all of that armouring that we carry around with us has served a purpose and as we move towards letting go practices, indeed what you just said is so often the case.

All of a sudden those feelings bubble up to the surface. I'm on my yoga mat, maybe I'm in a class and we're doing a hip opener and suddenly I start crying. Or a heart opener and we're opening across that musculature that protects the heart in the chest and these emotions or vulnerable feelings start to bubble up to the surface.

Ideally that's a good thing and it allows us to have a new, safe, reparative experience with ourselves where we can finally turn towards this in an environment with enough support and safety and recognizing that sometimes it can be too much too fast.

So we want to find those spaces, the safe enough spaces in a yoga practice or any embodiment practice where if those feelings arise, we have that capacity to attend to that now with greater acceptance and self compassion rather than rolling into shame.

Alex Howard

I guess that's also one of the ways that this work, in terms of downregulating the system, has such a correlation with sleep because it's the same thing often that happens at sleep. The time when we need to let go and be quiet is when there's the activation of this stuff that arises. And so I guess

almost deliberately doing that in a supported and held way through therapeutic yoga practice is a way of actually working that material.

[00:12:40] Dr Arielle Schwartz

It's so true. It can occur in meditation, it can occur in sleep. Any of those practices where we are consciously letting go of control. So we had the control that we spoke about before around choice. But what can occur as we're dropping off into a sleep state or relaxation practice, and we'll speak more about what yoga nidra is, but as that occurs, it is a surrender practice, it is a receptive state. It's more what we talk about as the lunar side of the Yogic practice versus that solar active side.

It can feel very frightening to experience that quality of a loss of control that's associated with that element of letting go. And when we practice it, when we have those opportunities, not necessarily trying to practice it right before going to bed every night, which of course we all do every day, we have those opportunities for practice. But it can be so frustrating when you're not falling asleep and you're looking at the clock and you're going, oh my gosh, I'm only going to get 4 hours of sleep. It's what insomnia does to us, and I've been there.

And so the opportunities to practice during specific mindful practice times, whether that's an afternoon meditation or an early evening yoga nidra practice, where we are exploring what it is like to let go of muscular tension? What is it like to soften the mind and to allow the mind to go where it needs to go rather than directing the mind?

And can we do that in these more controlled environments so that we can then be with what emerges in that journey of letting go without it feeling quite so threatening to our night's sleep.

Alex Howard

And I guess also part of it is having, if there is significant trauma that's being activated, it's also having the professional holding and support to allow us to meet those places.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah. And I'll share with you two little stories because I always feel like these bring certain things home. The first one is a story of my own insomnia. And this was after the birth of my first child. And I had significant postpartum anxiety. Certainly there were threads of postpartum depression in there, but it mostly showed up for me as anxiety. Anxiety about the massiveness of this life transition and how I was adapting to all the hormonal changes in my body.

And this went on for several months to the point that when I would wake up in the night, because she was waking up in the night, I couldn't fall back asleep. And that built. And all of us know what it's like to not sleep for a few nights. But when that goes on for weeks and when that goes on for months, you start to feel absolutely nuts.

I have such deep compassion for those who have insomnia that has gone on for years because that window into how stressful it was to not sleep and then all of the bundling of I'm stressing that I'm not sleeping and now I'm stressing that I'm stressing that I'm not sleeping. So it is such a deep journey of reclaiming that nervous system reset and to know that there are certain strategies and tools that can actually help us reclaim that.

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And I used all of them, including things like removing all the clocks from my room, like not giving myself any orientation to time. I really needed ultimate darkness. Like certain things and all of the sleep hygiene that we speak about in terms of trying to reset my circadian rhythm that had gotten off kilter because of waking up so often and needing to go to sleep.

Sleep when my daughter sleeps and go to sleep at as much of a regular time at night early enough before it kicks into that stress response. And then practicing these relaxation strategies when I was up in the middle of the night so that I could go back to sleep.

Alex Howard

And what was the impact? Because I'm sure there's folks that are watching and thinking, did it work?

Dr Arielle Schwartz

By all means, it worked. That's I think really what ultimately allowed the insomnia to end after three months. And of course there was a hormonal rebalancing that happened in my system at that point too. All of these questions of what continues to work? It doesn't mean that I always sleep through the night, every single night now.

There are strategies that I continue to use that consistently work. One of which is that if I do wake up in the night and my mind is starting to run because that seems to be that switch that then goes is it's here first and then once my mind is running into planning or worrying, my body also keys up into that. And then there's this piggybacking between the two.

So I use something called the sleep container, which is a practice we use in trauma recovery, which is to use an imaginary container. Or you can even literally keep a notepad by your bed and write the things you're worrying about and then close the notebook or close the journal. Or you can have an imagined container that can hold all of those worries and you make an agreement with your psyche that says, I'm going to return to those thoughts or those to dos in the right time, right place, so that I can attend to that when I wake up in the morning.

And as a result of that, I usually can fall back asleep once I've made that agreement, and sometimes I literally am scared I'm going to forget the thing I'm worried about. So I just have to lean over, write it down and then go back to bed. Other things that I make sure I don't do are pick up my phone in the middle of the night. Not a good idea.

Alex Howard

If you don't mind sharing the story that you shared with me before we started recording about what happened last night. That was another good example of this.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Exactly so it was so funny. Usually I get all of these reminder emails about when we're doing our talks together and I didn't get one. And then I also for some reason didn't stick it in my calendar, but some part of my brain knew that on this day, this was the day that you and I were meant to meet. And I woke up in the middle of the night, and I was just in that state where I was like my mind was trying to figure something out.

[00:19:35]

And finally the little connection was made, and I thought, oh, yeah, I'm meeting with Alex. I need to look at that first thing in the morning and remind myself of what time, especially because I had a dentist appointment before this this morning and I needed to make sure they weren't at the same time. And it was like as soon as I knew what my brain was trying to remind me of and I made an agreement to look at it first thing in the morning, I slept like a baby after that, and it was such a treasure.

Alex Howard

Yeah. And I think it's a great example of that, of course there's many different causes of sleep issues, and I don't want to trivialize it for people that have chronic insomnia, but I think sometimes there's just something that's actively trying to get our attention that when we can listen to that and make sense of that, it no longer needs to be shouting for our attention.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah. I actually have two other stories I want to share. One is a personal one, but in response to what you just said, I was working with an individual for quite a while who had chronic insomnia, debilitating insomnia. And I really feel like our work ended up being a collaborative teamwork where there were sleep hygiene practices. She had a trauma history, so we were working on the trauma related elements of that.

She had a psychiatrist that was working medically, and she also had an herbalist that was looking at this from some other supplementations. So we had a really nice sleep team surrounding her. She also was willing to engage in yoga and breathing practices. It was an optimal environment to really target the insomnia and get traction. I think that we have to attend to insomnia from a lot of different angles.

And that's what I love about you doing a whole conference on sleep, is that you are, I'm sure, speaking to people who are targeting this from so many different angles. One of the angles that we attended to, and I have seen this with multiple clients over the years, was the vigilance in her nervous system that would show up at night, especially for an individual who experienced some invasive trauma at night time, where that vigilance of listening for things like footsteps down the hall or the turning of a doorknob. So those kinds of really vulnerable traumas.

And so recognizing that this individual, an adult now, in a very safe environment with a whole different array of choices that she has now that weren't available to her as a young child. And so different practices that we explored that really helped with the insomnia, one was to do a working through the trauma of removing that child part from the trauma scene and actually bringing the part of her, this is a parts work intervention, that very young girl into her own safe place with people that would protect her and nurture her.

And once we established a safe place for that young part and we embellished that with visualization and with the felt sense of knowing that she was safe in the here and now and her body could respond to that visualization of that young part being removed from the unsafe situation, that was a very essential element of reestablishing the ability to sleep at night.

And coupled with that, we worked with actually really engaging in having protectors around that imagery. So if you could imagine now that this house that she had brought that young child into had

these turrets around it with sentinels that were taking over the vigilance on her behalf so that in the visualization we could really hand off that need to protect to the rightful place. A child needed to have been protected by an adult and so we established that within the imagery and over time that really stuck, that was the practice that she could engage in every night before bed.

[00:23:53] Alex Howard

That's very cool and also it sounds like there was an unconscious impact, but there was also a sense that she had a tool that she could work with which also was reinforcing that.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Exactly and at that point, once you have something that you can repeat and to practice, for me it's the sleep container and sometimes I just even preemptively if I'm like oh wow, I worked long today, I have a lot on my mind, I'll use that sleep container preemptively before going to bed. Put the things that my mind is still trying to figure out and I'll say, I'll tend to that tomorrow. This is the time I need to sleep.

So the other story that I wanted to share was actually a yoga nidra story and so yoga nidra, just to back up for a moment, it stands for Yogic sleep and it's a practice that we do in a very specific manner of really letting your mind access or attend to each area of your body with the intention as you are scanning your body with that mental attention and you're bringing your attention inward that you're releasing and letting go of unnecessary holding or tension.

And sometimes we need to couple this with more progressive muscle relaxation where you tense around an area so you can sense and feel it and then you let it go. And there's really beautiful programs out there, one called iRest that is a trauma-informed approach to yoga nidra that couples in some safe place imagery and very clear intentionality. And so I really like to approach it with all of those key elements.

And I was at a yoga conference and we were doing a whole lot of connective tissue release and fascia release. And there was this tipping point for me where I could feel that my body had released so much of that holding that I started to develop a migraine. And those are very, again that's something that I have suffered with for many years, I have a tremendous amount of compassion for migraine sufferers, and in that moment I knew I couldn't do any more physical practice.

And I was held in the space with other students and the instructor that was guiding us through this therapeutic release process. And I had this opportunity to be cocooned. And at that point they were continuing to do some other physical practices and I just rolled up in my mat and the instructor just wrapped blankets around me and made sure that I was so deeply held and comfortable.

And I think what can be so tricky in our modern world is that we value productivity and we value that action of getting things done. And we don't necessarily prioritize or always value those states of cocooning or deep rest. And to be held in a space where they could do their thing, but what I was doing in the corner wrapped in blankets, held and knowing that someone was just tracking and holding space for whatever needed to happen in that state of that deep inward turn of my attention, that is how I treat my migraines now.

As soon as I start to sense a migraine is coming on, it's time to cocoon. And I go in and I wrap myself up and I go as deep in as I need to go until whatever is emerging through that journey has resolved.

And sometimes it's a conscious process and sometimes I don't know what's resolving, but something always evolves in a cocooning journey.

[00:27:47] Alex Howard

And somehow I think what's also happening there is that you're recognizing that the migraine is on some level also a wisdom, like there's something that wants to express or wants to resolve. And I think that's sometimes the case with sleep as well, that there's a wisdom that when things go quiet, certain things arise and present themselves to have some attention.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, it's beautiful that you name it that way, because in yoga nidra we use what we call a sankalpa. It's an intention practice. And a sankalpa is a sacred vow that we make to ourselves. And I often liken this to planting a seed deep in the earth and trusting that in right time, what's going to emerge from that seed can do so. But it requires darkness and it requires the heaviness of the dirt on top of it in order to stimulate the growth from that seed.

And when we set an intention or name a sankalpa for ourselves, it absolutely requires a step of surrender, a trust that there's a non-doing element to allowing what needs to arise. Whether that's in sleep. Whether that's in meditation. Whether that's in yoga nidra, that we trust that in the stillness, in the non-doing, there's a very important element that ultimately supports all of the doing that we might later engage in in our world.

Alex Howard

And then, of course, the courage is to turn towards that. In those moments where we might want to escape or to get away, to be able to either have a certain amount of discipline of practice or maybe it's external support that we need, but we're able to turn towards those places.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah. And you're reminding me of something that I think is at the heart of that autonomic nervous system balance or imbalance. And that in the earliest developmental experiences that we have in the world, going to infancy and this can even sometimes begin in utero, but when there are highly stressful or overstimulating environments or traumatic environments, it can disrupt that autonomic balance.

And the autonomic balance is our rhythm of engagement and disengagement. So if you think about a parent and child, a child signals their rhythm, or an infant will even signal their rhythm, for engagement and disengagement in some very specific ways. And ideally, in an attuned enough, securely attached, early parenting environment, the parent is tracking or observing those signals and responding.

So, for example, if we think about just an infant parent play, that the child might make eye contact or gaze or smile or coo in some way and of course the attuned parent would respond with a certain amount of delight. And then the child responds with further delight and excitement. We have this exchange of ooh, ahh, and there's this burst of excitement, sympathetic nervous system engagement. Eyes are open, we're external.

[00:31:35]

And then the infant, predictably, will do something very important. Looks away. And that moment of looking away is actually driven by the nervous system that says, that was enough sensory input. That's a lot of information that just came in. And I need to digest that. And to digest that, I have to go inward. And so whether it's looking away or whether we basically drop into those more soft eyes or glazed over eyes or going inward, and those communications that signal that there was enough input and I need to go in and digest that, ideally are honored.

Ideally are setting that recognition that we have rhythms of connection and disconnection that are very essential to our core nature. And what we know about the work of Ed Tronick, for example, who's a parent child, an infant researcher, is that parents who are misattuned either because of their own trauma or because of a history of depression, whatever that might be, will often misattune to those cues.

And if the infant looks away, what might happen is, oh, come back and play with me again. Because if I can't tolerate that inward turn and you're looking away from me, I might feel abandoned or frightened of what will arise when I slow down. So I keep us up in this sympathetic state and then, this is not even speaking about situations where there might be domestic violence in the home or other forms of highly, highly stressful, yelling, screaming, abuse that might be occurring, which can also keep one vigilant to those cues. So these patterns often start very young.

Alex Howard

Yeah, I was going to say, and then bringing in the practices of Asana practice in yoga or yoga nidra or indeed the body awareness elements that come into yoga, of course, part of what that's then helping us to do is to retrain those responses, but also to metabolize and digest what may be being held in the system.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Exactly. We often think of rest and digest as just digesting our food, but we're actually digesting everything. All of the input, all that we have ingested. What we have taken into our sensory experience of visual, auditory, gustatory, the quality of touch, the smells, everything that we have taken into our external senses needs to ultimately be digested. And digestion has key elements of discernment.

What's nourishing? What's good for me? What do I want to incorporate as a part of me? And what actually is the waste or what was toxic and what do I need to excrete or get rid of? And that is true on all of those levels. Life experiences. What about that life experience needs to become a part of me? And what about that life experience actually isn't even about me, isn't good for me and needs to be released and again, we'll come back to that theme of letting go.

Alex Howard

So what helps us be more able to let go? Because of course, part of the impact is that we get used to holding on and we can become very normalized to what's being held in our system. Just like when it comes to sleep dysregulation, someone can become very normalized to the fact that it takes them an hour to get to sleep or that they're going to be awake at night. So what helps us start to digest, to metabolize?

[00:35:52] Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah, I think part of it is something we've named already, which is to practice this on a regular basis. So if you think about like, we have all of our active practices, whether it's a yoga practice or going to the gym, we have practices that are strengthening or building muscular capacity, but we also want to engage in letting go practices and to view it as something that we would return to on a regular basis.

For me, I had an active asana practice, or movement yoga practice, way before I really embraced a daily meditation practice. And once I recognized that I needed to learn the art of stillness and I needed to really embrace sitting daily as a practice of letting go, it changed my life. It was really profound and one of those moments where I go, wow, it took me so long to get here, but I'm so glad I'm finally here.

And when letting go, just even hearing those words sometimes they're like, no, not me. No, I'm not surrendering. I'm not letting go. I like control. That feels really scary. So when we practice it, sometimes we have to practice smaller, shorter rounds of this. It's like, okay, I'm not going to go to the gym and do 20 reps on the hardest weights right away. I won't be able to use my arms the next day, or how many squats or whatever you're doing.

So you want to do smaller practice rounds at the beginning, whether that's starting with just two minutes of a meditation practice and building to five minutes. And you can work even with a mantra around I am letting go, I am surrendering, I am receiving. And to set those intentions around your practice and to also know that even if you're engaging in just a five minute practice of something like yoga nidra where you're consciously scanning your body and relaxing muscular engagement, you can always know that you have a choice.

Because that's the trauma informed baseline. Choice is essential. Without choice, we can feel trapped and we can feel threatened. So to know that I'm choosing to release the tension in my right arm, and to just really let that go. But if I needed to, I could re engage it at any moment. Or I'm choosing to close my eyes, but if I needed to, I could reopen them at any moment. So that I have a choice, and that even moving towards the relaxation or restorative practices is also a choice.

Alex Howard

And sometimes that in and of itself, I guess, is the transformation, that maybe we didn't have a choice in the past and now we realize that we do.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Exactly. You just named it because that is the quintessential baseline of trauma. It's an event that we didn't choose and that it takes us to an experience of being quite out of control. So to know that we actually have choice and control on the route of letting go is this wild intersection of actually choosing to do something. You used the word courageous before and I'm so glad you did. It is a courageous act to surrender.

Alex Howard

Yeah. Sometimes we think the courageous act is the doing of something, but actually the real courage often is the not doing of something and the letting something be. I'm mindful of the time here, but I'd love to just summarize a few key starting points for people.

[00:39:51]

So we'll come in a minute to how people can find out more about you and your work, but someone that's watching this that is resonating with what you're speaking to, what are some of the practical places that they can start to integrate some of this into their life?

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah. So the first piece that I would say is what is the level of support that you have in your life right now around the experience of not sleeping or however that might be showing up for you? And I think that having your sleep team in place, and there are so many resources that you're getting from this conference to build that, and that sleep team might be people.

That sleep team might be supplements, that sleep team might be herbs, it might be medication, it might be agreements with your partner that they are going to not disrupt your sleep time. So there can be a lot of different parameters that we put around protecting sleep. But I think that when we come into the safety to relax and to let go, we need to know that we're supported. So what does that support team look like for you?

Alex Howard

Yeah, fantastic. And I guess then it's having, whatever that may be, a commitment to those daily practices, be it an Asana practice, a yoga nidra practice, and as you talked about in your own experience, sometimes we know what to do in our mind, but the actual getting ourselves to do it is sometimes the more challenging piece.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Yeah. I have yoga practices that I teach that are specific to reclaiming nervous system flexibility, where we go into little bits of movement and then we come into restorative rest, and we go back and forth to really get that felt experience in the nervous system of what we might call the kind of Yang practice, that active solar practice, right back into Yin. I know you'll have me share this in a moment, but I'll say it now.

I had a pandemic project because I wanted to make trauma-informed yoga as available as possible during this time. So I created a YouTube channel. It is all free. And there's over 100 videos out there that are guided practices. A lot of them are movement practices. So you can scan through. There's a yoga nidra practice. There's some guided breath practices. So really look for the kinds of practices that support you. I love to be guided and led in my relaxation practices, whether that's using Insight Timer or somebody else's YouTube channel, because I find that it's helpful to feel that someone else is holding the space for me to let go.

Alex Howard

I also find that I seem to hold postures a bit longer when someone else is counting. For people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best place to go and what some of what people can find?

[00:42:53] Dr Arielle Schwartz

Super. All right, so I have a website. It's drarielleschwartz.com. Just dr and my name. drarielleschwartz.com. On that page, there's a blog where I talk about all things about trauma recovery and the vagus nerve. And then I have a page on there that's called Yoga Therapy. And if you click on that, it will give you access to whether you want to attend a live class with me, which you're welcome to do, they're still on zoom, or you can also find my [YouTube channel](#) on a direct link on there, and you can find all of those recordings as well.

And I have quite a few books. You'll learn about that on the website. I have one on therapeutic yoga for trauma recovery, as well as books on integrative models of parts work and somatic and EMDR and so forth. So thank you.

Alex Howard

Fantastic. Dr Arielle Schwartz, it's always a pleasure. I really appreciate you sharing today. Thank you.

Dr Arielle Schwartz

Likewise. It's such a joy.