

Remembering to rest

One of the most important elements of a good hatha yoga workout comes at the end, when you go into what is called *shaavaasana* (the corpse pose), one of my favorite postures.

Spirituality in Action

Lie on your back with your hands out just a bit from your body, palms gently open and facing up. Keep your feet slightly separated. Relax your entire body, either bit by bit or all at once. You may want to tighten and relax different parts of your body — your toes, hips, stomach, chest, arms, hands, throat, and face — or you can just relax everything together right away. Allow your breath to become deep and steady.

As you lie in shaavaasana, you may also want to practice something called the *full yogic breath*, where you breath in deeply, filling first your stomach area, then your chest area, and then your upper ribcage area. Then you pause for a moment before releasing the breath, starting again at the stomach area and again moving up to flatten down the chest and upper ribcage areas. This breathing exercise can come to feel like a wave of healing energy.

After doing full yogic breath for a while, let your breath return to its natural flow and relax completely into the pose. Some teachers say that if you don't include this resting shaavaasana time at the end of your hatha yoga routine, you won't receive as many benefits from the exercises. This relaxing yoga pose is one more example of how spirituality is not about doing more, but doing what is best.

Consider

You can also apply the philosophy behind this pose to your life, understanding the importance of adding moments of deep rest to your activities. Perhaps you'd like to go into shaavaasana for a few minutes before you go to sleep at night.

Living longer versus having fun

A man approaching retirement went to see the company doctor for one final checkup. To his horror, the doctor said, "I don't know quite how to put this, but your heart is on its last legs, and you have only six months to live."

"Is there nothing I can do?" asked the shocked man.

"Well," said the doctor, "you can give up alcohol and cut out smoking. Don't eat rich foods, don't go dancing, and don't even think about sex!"

"And this will make me live longer?" the man asked hopefully.

"No," replied the doctor. "It will just seem longer!"