AYURVEDA AND YOGA · STUDY RESISTANCE

From Resistance to Readiness

You sincerely want to learn, and yet the assignment stays unopened. Another cup of tea, a tidy desk, a quick look at your phone, a promise that tomorrow will be better. This guide accompanies our blog of the same name. It helps you understand *why* you resist, using the *guṇas*, the *doṣas*, the *kleśas* and *Kriyā Yoga*, and gives you practical tools to take the next conscious step.

Awareness **Clarity** **Intention** **Conscious action**

Resistance is rarely laziness

Research on procrastination shows that we mostly delay tasks that bring up uncomfortable feelings; postponing gives quick relief, which is why the pattern repeats. Which of these sounds familiar?

Overwhelm
Too much at once. The mind goes blank and you do not know where to begin.

Perfectionism
If it cannot be excellent, it feels safer not to start, or not to submit.

Inertia
You know what to do, but the first step feels heavy and far away.

Fear of judgement
Worry about what a teacher, a supervisor or you yourself will think.

Fatigue or overload
You care, but there is genuinely little left after work and family.

Lost purpose
You have temporarily lost sight of why this learning matters to you.

What is inside this guide

- **The three guṇas** and a quick self-check
- **The five kleśas**: the deeper roots of resistance
- **The three doṣas**: your pattern and what helps
- **Agni**: digesting what you learn
- **Sattvāvajaya and Kriyā Yoga:** guiding the mind
- **Saṅkalpa** and the **3-2-1 rule**
- **A six-step practice** and activation checklist
- **A reflection worksheet** to print and reuse
- **A seven-day study reset** with tracker
- **When resistance asks for more**, and next steps

Begin here: *What am I resisting: the assignment itself, or the feeling that arises when I think about it?*

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TRIGUṆA · THREE QUALITIES OF MIND

The Three Guṇas

Ayurveda and Yoga describe three qualities that constantly shape our thoughts, emotions and behaviour: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Ayurveda names rajas and tamas as the two *doṣas* of the mind (Caraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 1.57), yet both have useful roles. The aim is not to remove them, but to cultivate sattva so that our actions become conscious and balanced.

Sattva · clarity
Brings: calm focus, discernment, understanding.
At your desk: the next step is clear; learning feels like growth rather than a test of your worth.

Rajas · activity
Useful for: momentum, starting, caring about results.
In excess: restlessness, overthinking, distraction. Busy, with little progress.

Tamas · stability
Useful for: rest, steadiness, deep sleep that consolidates memory.
In excess: dullness, heaviness, avoidance. Hard to begin.

Which guṇa is leading right now?

Pause for a minute and tick what is true *at this moment*.

- ☐ My thoughts jump between several things.
- ☐ I feel the pull to check my phone or messages.
- ☐ I feel pressured, irritable or hard on myself.
- ☐ I feel restless and find it hard to sit still.
- ☐ My body feels heavy, sluggish or sleepy.
- ☐ I would rather do almost anything than begin.
- ☐ I have been postponing this for several days.
- ☐ I can see clearly what my next step is.
- ☐ I feel reasonably calm and able to concentrate.
- ☐ I feel a quiet sense of purpose about this work.

What your answers suggest

Mostly lines 1–4	**Rajas** leads. Settle first: slow exhalations, close the tabs, clear the desk, write one next step.
Mostly lines 5–7	**Tamas** leads. Activate gently: stand up, move, open a window, start for just five minutes.
Mostly lines 8–10	**Sattva** is present. Begin now, and protect this state.

Note: a mixture is normal, and your state can change within an hour. This is a prompt for self-observation, not a diagnostic test. The *Bhagavad Gītā* (chapter 14) describes the three guṇas and how each shapes experience.

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KLEŚA · YOGA SŪTRA 2.3–2.9

The Five Kleśas

Patañjali names five *kleśas*, afflictions that cloud clear perception (Yoga Sūtra 2.3). These teachings are traditionally about spiritual liberation, not homework. Still, they offer a meaningful lens for reflecting on the deeper roots of everyday resistance.

Avidyā misperception	A fundamental misunderstanding of what is real and lasting. **In study:** seeing a temporary difficulty as a permanent limitation: "This is hard, so perhaps I am not capable." *Ask yourself: Am I seeing this clearly, or is a limiting belief shaping my experience?*
Asmitā I-am-ness	Identifying awareness with the instruments of perception and individuality. **In study:** tying your worth to your results. Perfectionism protects you from a mistake that feels like a threat to who you are. *Ask yourself: Can I separate the quality of my work from my value as a person?*
Rāga attachment	Attachment that follows pleasant experience. **In study:** choosing comfort now, such as scrolling or another pleasant task, over effort that carries deeper meaning. *Ask yourself: Am I choosing what feels pleasant now over what matters more to me?*
Dveṣa aversion	Aversion that follows unpleasant experience. **In study:** avoiding the uncertainty, boredom or fear of criticism the task brings up. The relief of postponing reinforces the habit. *Ask yourself: Am I avoiding the assignment, or the feeling I associate with it?*
Abhiniveśa clinging to life	The deep instinct of self-preservation and fear of death. **In study:** ordinary fear of failure is not the same thing, but the concept invites reflection on how strongly we cling to the safe and familiar. *Ask yourself: What am I afraid might change if I step beyond what is familiar?*

Awareness creates the possibility of choice

The purpose of exploring the kleśas is not to judge ourselves. When we notice the attachments, fears and assumptions at work, a space opens between the impulse and our response. Instead of postponing on autopilot, we can pause and ask: *"What is really happening within me right now?"* Yoga Sūtra 2.2 teaches that the practices of Kriyā Yoga (page 6) help to weaken the kleśas.

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VĀTA · PITTA · KAPHA

Doṣas and Resistance

The doṣas offer a traditional language for recognising different qualities of mental and behavioural experience. You will probably recognise yourself in more than one column, and your pattern can change with season, workload and life stage. These are illustrative patterns, not psychological diagnoses.

Vāta

space and air · when the mind is overwhelmed

"There is so much to do. I do not know where to begin."

YOU MAY NOTICE

- Many ideas, many half-finished drafts
- Worry, uncertainty, overthinking
- Irregular study times
- Easily overstimulated

WHAT HELPS

- Structure before productivity
- One task, broken into small steps
- A regular study time and place
- Fewer choices: one notebook, one tab
- Warmth and a quiet space

BREATH AND MOVEMENT

Slow, grounding poses such as Tāḍāsana; Nāḍī Śodhana; a long, slow exhalation.

Go easy on: more apps and plans, late nights, coffee and studying in a rush.

Pitta

fire and water · when perfectionism blocks

"If I cannot do it properly, I would rather not begin."

YOU MAY NOTICE

- Over-researching, endless rewriting
- Self-criticism and comparison
- Frustration with slow progress
- Postponing submission

WHAT HELPS

- Let work develop in stages
- A first draft is not a final draft
- Set time limits per section
- Decide on "good enough" in advance
- Ask for feedback early

BREATH AND MOVEMENT

Cooling, non-striving practice; forward bends; Śītalī or a slow, soft exhalation.

Go easy on: harsh self-talk, all-or-nothing deadlines, comparing grades, skipping rest.

Kapha

earth and water · when starting is hard

"I know I need to do it, but I just do not feel motivated."

YOU MAY NOTICE

- Difficulty initiating
- Heaviness, low stimulation
- Comfortable routines win
- Steady once you have begun

WHAT HELPS

- Movement before study
- A ten-minute start, nothing more
- Change of place or method
- A study partner or check-in
- Lighter meals before studying

BREATH AND MOVEMENT

Brisk walk, Sūrya Namaskāra, standing poses; energising breath only as you have been taught.

Go easy on: waiting to feel ready, long unstructured days, heavy meals, studying in bed.

VĀTA	PITTA	KAPHA
Not doing more, but simplifying.	**Progress over perfection.**	**Action can come before motivation.**

A note on breathwork: stimulating techniques such as Bhastrikā and Kapālabhāti are not suitable for everyone, for example during pregnancy or with high blood pressure, heart or anxiety conditions. When in doubt, choose a gentle, slow breath.

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AGNI · THE TRANSFORMING FIRE

Digesting What You Learn

In Ayurveda, *agni* is the fire of digestion and transformation. Caraka describes four states of digestive agni: balanced (*sama*), irregular (*viṣama*), sharp (*tīkṣṇa*) and slow (*manda*) (Vimānasthāna 6.12). Agni is first a physiological concept, but digestion is also a helpful image for how we absorb and integrate information.

Please note: the learning patterns below are an educational analogy for this guide, not the classical definitions of the four types of agni.

Viṣama-like learning · irregular
Bursts of enthusiasm, then days of nothing. Understanding comes and goes.

Tīkṣṇa-like learning · sharp
Long, intense late-night sessions, then exhaustion or irritability.

Manda-like learning · slow
Material feels heavy, reading must be repeated, hard to get going.

Sama-like learning · balanced
Regular sessions, steady understanding and time to integrate.

Are you absorbing more than you can integrate?

Just as eating before the last meal is digested burdens the body, adding chapter after chapter can overload the mind. Sometimes what looks like resistance is really mental overload.

- Explain what you learned in your own words
- Pause between topics instead of filling every gap
- Ask how new material links to what you know
- Protect your sleep, especially before exams

Study habits that support digestion

Retrieval practice	Close the book and write or say what you remember. Recalling strengthens memory more than re-reading.
Spaced review	Revisit new material after a day, a few days and a week rather than in one long session.
Chunking	Divide each assignment into steps of 15–45 minutes and list them.
One source at a time	Summarise before opening the next; working memory has a limited capacity.
Rest and sleep	Sleep plays an active part in turning what you studied into lasting memory.

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SATTVĀVAJAYA · KRIYĀ YOGA

Guiding the Mind

Classical Ayurveda describes *sattvāvajaya* as restraining the mind from unwholesome objects (Caraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 11.54), and names knowledge, understanding, courage, memory and concentration as remedies for the mind (Sūtrasthāna 1.58). Applied to study, it means meeting a thought with discernment instead of obeying it on autopilot.

Changing your relationship with a thought

"I am not ready."	I do not need to know everything before I begin. I can start with what I understand and learn along the way.
"I do not know enough."	Not knowing yet is why I am studying. I can write what I know and note questions for my teacher.
"It must be perfect."	A complete, good-enough draft teaches me more than one perfect paragraph.
"I will begin tomorrow."	Tomorrow the same feelings will be there. What is a ten-minute version I can do today?
"I cannot concentrate."	That is useful information. Shorter sessions, a movement break, or real rest if I am depleted.

These responses are a contemporary application inspired by sattvāvajaya. The aim is not to suppress thoughts or feelings, but to stop letting them decide for us.

Kriyā Yoga: from understanding to action

In Yoga Sūtra 2.1, Patañjali describes the yoga of action through three practices that work together.

Tapas · disciplined effort
The willingness to begin before you feel fully ready, and to return to practice again and again.
Not pushing beyond your limits: healthy discipline respects your capacity.

Svādhyāya · self-study
Traditionally the study of sacred texts; also self-observation.
Notice what happens when study gets hard: frustration, withdrawal, comparison?

Īśvara praṇidhāna · surrender
Devotion to a higher principle.
Reflectively: sincere effort without demanding control over every outcome. Feedback is not a verdict on your worth.

Tapas helps us begin. **Svādhyāya** helps us understand ourselves. **Īśvara praṇidhāna** loosens our grip on the result.

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SAṄKALPA · HEARTFELT INTENTION

Reconnect With Purpose

A *saṅkalpa* is a consciously held intention that gives direction to action. It is different from pressure. Pressure says *"you must, or else"*; a saṅkalpa says *"this matters to me, and I choose to move towards it."* When we reconnect with purpose, discipline becomes an expression of intention.

My saṅkalpa for learning

Why did I begin studying Ayurveda?

What originally inspired me, and what does this knowledge mean to me?

Who may benefit from what I am learning?

What small step can I take today that honours my intention?

My saṅkalpa, in one or two sentences, in the present tense:

Examples: "I approach my studies with curiosity, patience and consistency." · "I allow myself to learn through practice, without expecting perfection." · "Today, I choose progress over perfection."

The 3-2-1 rule: turning intention into action

A simple modern countdown that interrupts hesitation. It resembles the better-known 5 Second Rule popularised by Mel Robbins.

1. **Notice the resistance.** You are scrolling, tidying or overthinking instead of starting.
2. **Choose one small action.** "I will open my document and write the first sentence."
3. **Count down.** Silently or aloud: 3... 2... 1... Go!
4. **Move at once.** On "one", take the physical action: open the file, pick up the pen.
5. **Continue for five minutes.** Permission to begin, not a demand to finish.

Good to know: the countdown is a modern behavioural cue, not a classical Ayurvedic practice, and it does not replace rest or support when you are truly overwhelmed. It works best when you already know what to do but keep hesitating.

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A SIMPLE AYURVEDIC PRACTICE

Resistance to Readiness

The next time you notice yourself postponing an assignment, try this short practice. Over time the sequence itself becomes a cue, so beginning takes less willpower.

1. **Pause and observe.** Before opening your laptop, notice your state: restless, anxious, pressured, distracted, heavy or exhausted? Name it without judging it.
2. **Recognise the pattern.** What am I resisting: the amount of work, the fear of mistakes, not knowing where to begin, or the feeling the task brings up? Does one of the kleśas offer a useful perspective?
3. **Create the right conditions.** Respond to what you genuinely need:

Overwhelmed?	Pressured?	Sluggish?	Exhausted?
Simplify: one task, one step.	Soften expectations; cool, slow breath.	Move: walk, stretch, fresh air.	Rest, or ask for support.

4. **Establish your saṅkalpa.** Remember why this work matters, and choose a short intention for this session.
5. **Practise tapas with the 3-2-1 rule.** Not "finish the assignment" but "read the instructions and write three sentences". Count 3... 2... 1... and set a timer for 5–15 minutes.
6. **Reflect through svādhyāya.** What thoughts arose? What helped? Did the resistance change once you began? Recognise the effort, not only the outcome.

15-minute study activation checklist

- ☐ Three slow breaths; I noticed how I feel
- ☐ I named the leading quality: restless, pressured, heavy or clear
- ☐ I did one regulating practice for 3–4 minutes
- ☐ I recalled my saṅkalpa
- ☐ I wrote one specific next action
- ☐ Desk clear; phone silent and out of reach
- ☐ Timer set for 10–15 minutes; 3... 2... 1...
- ☐ Afterwards I chose consciously: continue, rest or reschedule

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SVĀDHYĀYA · PRINT AND REUSE

Reflection Worksheet

Use this page whenever you notice yourself avoiding a task. It takes about ten minutes.

Name _____ Date _____

A · MY RESISTANCE PATTERN

What am I avoiding?

What thoughts arise?

What emotions do I notice?

What do I feel in my body?

B · MY CURRENT STATE (CIRCLE)

restless · pressured · heavy · fatigued · clear

WHICH KLEŚA FEELS RELEVANT? (CIRCLE)

avidyā · asmitā · rāga · dveṣa · abhiniveśa

C · WHAT DO I ACTUALLY NEED? (CIRCLE)

structure · rest · reassurance · movement · clarity · support · a smaller task

D · ONE MANAGEABLE ACTION

The smallest meaningful step I can take today:

E · MY SAṄKALPA

The intention that guides my learning:

F · REFLECTION AFTER STUDYING

How did I feel before beginning?

How did I feel after 15 minutes?

What supported me?

What will I repeat tomorrow?

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ABHYĀSA · STEADY PRACTICE

A Seven-Day Study Reset

For times when study has stalled: after illness, a holiday or a demanding period at work. Each day asks for about 20–40 minutes. Missing a day is part of the process; simply continue with the next.

DAY AND THEME	MORNING PRACTICE AND STUDY ACTION	REFLECTION QUESTION
Day 1 · Awareness	**Practice:** Three slow breaths and a body scan. **Study:** Read the assignment brief once; note the feelings that arise.	*What did I notice as I approached the task?*
Day 2 · Grounding	**Practice:** One minute in Tāḍāsana, feeling your feet. **Study:** Prepare your study space: clear it, gather what you need.	*What helps me feel settled when I study?*
Day 3 · Clarity	**Practice:** Nāḍī Śodhana, nine rounds. **Study:** List your tasks; choose the most important and divide it into 5–8 steps.	*What is truly essential this week?*
Day 4 · Activation	**Practice:** Three Sūrya Namaskāra or a brisk walk. **Study:** Do the first step for ten minutes, ready or not. 3… 2… 1…	*How did starting compare with anticipating?*
Day 5 · Self-compassion	**Practice:** Hand on heart, slow exhalation, soften the face. **Study:** Write a deliberately imperfect draft of one section in 20 minutes.	*What would I say to a friend in my place?*
Day 6 · Consistency	**Practice:** Your favourite practice from this week. **Study:** Plan next week's study times in your calendar; do one 25-minute block.	*What rhythm can I keep, even on a tired week?*
Day 7 · Integration	**Practice:** Sit quietly and read your saṅkalpa aloud. **Study:** Review the week, refine your saṅkalpa and choose Monday's first step.	*What have I learned about how I learn?*

My seven-day tracker

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Morning practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Study action	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reflection written	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Felt the shift after starting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Slept enough	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Tip: the Yoga Sūtra teaches that practice becomes firmly grounded when it is sustained over time, without interruption and with care (1.14). Consistency matters more than intensity.

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WHEN RESISTANCE IS ASKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE

Sometimes the answer is not to push

Not every difficulty with motivation is an unhelpful habit. Persistent struggles can reflect exhaustion, chronic stress, too little sleep, anxiety or low mood, attention-related or learning differences, an unrealistic workload, or life circumstances that need support. Ayurvedic self-observation should never become another reason to blame yourself.

Reach out if difficulties last for several weeks, you feel persistently low or anxious, sleep or appetite have changed markedly, or you are falling behind and cannot catch up alone. Talk to your teacher or mentor about guidance or deadlines, and to your GP (*huisarts*) or another qualified professional about your health. Asking for help is itself an act of courage (*dhairya*).

A CLOSING REFLECTION

The practice begins not when resistance disappears, but when we learn to meet it with awareness and take one conscious step forward.

Studying Ayurveda, we are not only learning to understand life. We are also learning to observe and understand ourselves.

Continue your journey with Sankalpa

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Classical foundations: Caraka Saṃhitā, Sūtrasthāna 1.57–58 and 11.54; Vimānasthāna 6.12 · Yoga Sūtra 1.14, 2.1–2.9 · Bhagavad Gītā, chapter 14. **Modern sources:** Sirois & Pychyl (2013) on procrastination and mood; Roediger & Karpicke (2006) on retrieval practice; Cepeda et al. (2006) on spaced learning; Robbins, *The 5 Second Rule* (2017). Applying these teachings to study is a contemporary interpretation for reflection and education.

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