BODSPHERE®
Your Fitness, Our Goal

60-H YIN YOGATEACHER TRAINING MANUAL

TIME TO GO YIN-SIDE

BODSPHERE® Your Fitness, Our Goal

We want to see a smile on every face that exists and will exist in this beautiful Universe.

SAMARTHYA & PREETIKA BHATNAGAR
Founders, Bodsphere

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Your Fitness, Our Goal

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ABOUT BODSPHERE

Bodsphere is a leading Virtual Health & Wellness platform creating memorable personalised Wellness experiences for individuals and groups. We integrate traditional Ayurveda, Yoga and Meditation with international wellness experiences, fitness and healthy organic cuisine to restore balance and harmony.

VISION

Bodsphere's vision is to bring authentic yoga education to the world. Yoga is a practice for everyone. Our vision includes empowering people with the tools necessary to impart the highest knowledge of Yoga. We envision that our mission is delivered with friendliness, warmth and love.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a serene, safe, and welcoming space where students can explore their own yoga, develop their very own personal yoga journey and self transformation. We work to create peace in our world, communities and families by first creating peace within ourselves.

Our Yoga School seeks to expand the world's understanding of Yoga through education and training that are steeped in the Vedic tradition – the original roots of Yoga – and a long lineage of masters while making Yoga accessible and applicable for modern day use for people of all ages, abilities, cultures and religions.

This reflects Bodsphere's understanding and commitment to Yoga as a practice supporting physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and community health and wellness.

VALUES

HONESTY

Having the courage to be transparent in our feelings and what we do

SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

Taking responsibility for our situation in life

KINDNESS

Acting with compassion, empathy, and patience to make life more comfortable and enjoyable

DEDICATION

Taking on the challenge of the journey and focus upon the vision we want to manifest

SERVICE

Increasing the loving consciousness of the world through selfless service

MEET THE TRAINERS

SAMARTHYA BHATNAGAR

Founder, Bodsphere

With over 16 years of experience in the Health & Fitness Industry, Samarthya's teaching goes beyond intelligent alignment; moving any willing student to an introspective, holistic experience.

He comes with a bank of certifications from Europe, South East Asia,etc where has been conducting his workshops on Yoga, Natural Fitness, Weight Loss Programs, etc.

He is renowned for his depth of study, his ability to present the complexities of ancient wisdom in a practical, life-affirming manner, as well as his unique capacity to distill the teachings with humor and grace.

He views the science and spirituality of Yoga as a path to explore our inner selves and elevate our consciousness, while creating a counter-balance to the stresses of modern life.

PREETIKA BHATNAGAR

Co-Founder, Bodsphere

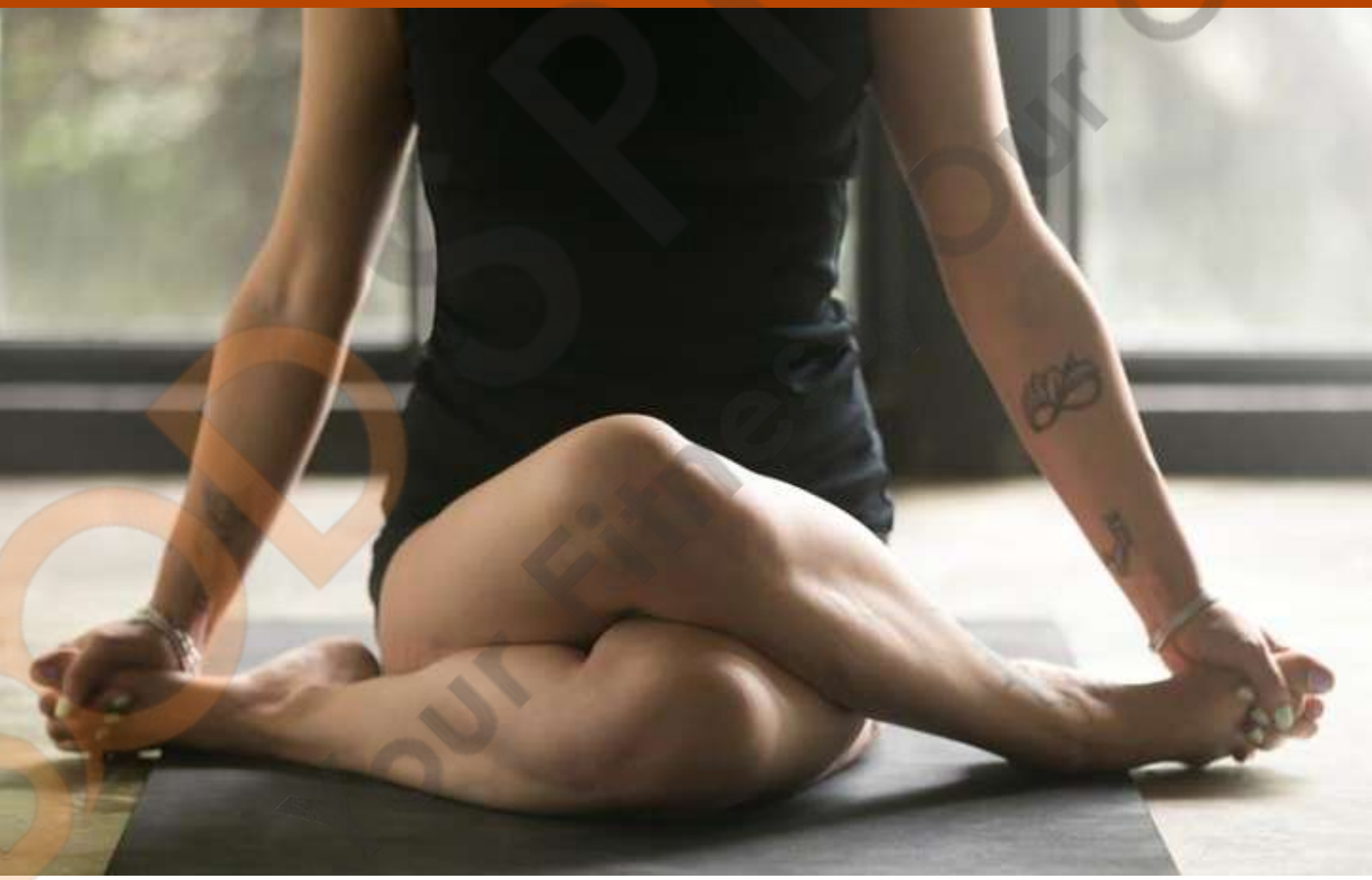
With Over 21 Years of experience in Gymnastics & Yoga, Preetika is a wellness guide and a lifestyle trainer of present era, with the expertise in the field of Holistic Health through Mindfulness and Ayurveda. She has been an Indian National Level Gymnast(with over 100 awards &medals) as she trained under Dr. Kalpana Debnath (Arjuna Awardee), Sports Authority of India.

Preetika is a devoted Yogini and teacher who imparts her wonderful passion for life and well-being in her teaching. Her style pulls from multiple yogic disciplines, and is both intuitive and steeped in the traditional aspects of yoga.

Her mission in life is to inspire, elevate and educate as many people as possible, to encourage all to live to their fullest, most creative and most joyful potential.

Introduction to

Yin Yoga



What is Yin Yoga?

Yin Yoga has the same goals and objectives as any other school of Yoga; however, it directs the stimulation normally created in the asana portion of the practice deeper than the superficial or muscular tissues (which we are calling the yang tissues). Yin Yoga targets the connective tissues, such as the ligaments, bones, and even the joints of the body that normally are not exercise very much in a more active style of asana practice. But, is it dangerous to exercise our joints? Yes and no. It depends on how we do it; we can exercise our joints safely if we do so intelligently. If done incorrectly, we can definitely hurt ourselves, but we can say that about any form of exercise.

Suitable for almost all levels of students, Yin Yoga is a perfect complement to the dynamic and muscular (yang) styles of yoga that emphasize internal heat, and the lengthening and contracting of our muscles. Yin Yoga generally targets the connective tissues of hips, pelvis, and lower spine.

Saying that Yin Yoga is the other half, that it works the deeper tissues of the body, is just the beginning of defining what Yin Yoga is all about. We need to take a look at the definitions of the underlying principles of Yin yoga to look at the intention behind engaging in a yoga practice, and to explore the benefits and methodologies used in a Yin Yoga practice.

There are many reasons for beginning a yoga practice; obtaining optimum physical health is just one. Many people are drawn to yoga to help reduce the effects of stress in their lives; others wish to deepen their meditation practices or to simply become more present in their daily lives.

Yoga in general and Yin Yoga in particular provides physical, mental, emotional and energetic benefits, and for some, spiritual. Which benefits you enjoy will depend greatly upon your intention when you practice.

How you practice is just as important as what you do in your practice. There is a yin aspect to life and a yang aspect. There is a yin way to practice yoga and a yang way that go beyond the actual movements and postures employed in a yoga session. Yin is yielding, allowing, and nourishing.

Even within an active, sweaty yang practice we can adopt a yin sensitivity that will help us gain much more from our yoga practice. Even within an active yang lifestyle, we can adopt a yin awareness and acceptance that will help us gain contentment in our lives.

In Yin Yoga, what we do will be different but how we do it will be the biggest difference. Why we do yoga really comes down to our own unique, particular intentions. Knowing the benefits of the Yin Yoga style will help you clarify intentions for your practice.

This style of yoga can seem quite boring, passive, or soft, yin practice can be quite challenging due to the long duration of the poses. Y*in Yoga is simple, but simple does not mean easy*. We can remain in the postures anywhere from one to twenty minutes. After practicing Yin Yoga, you will realize that you have been doing only half of the asana practice.

Yin and Yang

Yin and Yang are descriptive terms that are used to describe all levels of phenomena. Yin is the stable, unmoving, hidden aspect of an object. Yang is the changing, moving, revealing aspect of an object. These two aspects always coexist, there is never one without the other. Everything can be described in terms of its yin and yang. These two energies are of the same essence but reflect different qualities of energy and are ultimately inseparable.

Yin and Yang are relative

According to Taoism, the essential essence of all life is called Chi. It is synonymous with the terms Brahman in Hinduism, Sunyata in Buddhism, Ki or Qi in Japanese, lung in Tibetan, and prana in Sanskrit. It represents the Infinite in a condensed form. Chi is often translated as "energy", "breath", "air", "vital essence", or "the activating energy of the universe". It is neither created nor destroyed and is constantly transforming itself to reappear in different ways (Powers, 2008).

Taoist yogis suggest that as chi condenses into the physical realm, it splits into two complementary polarities called yin and yang.

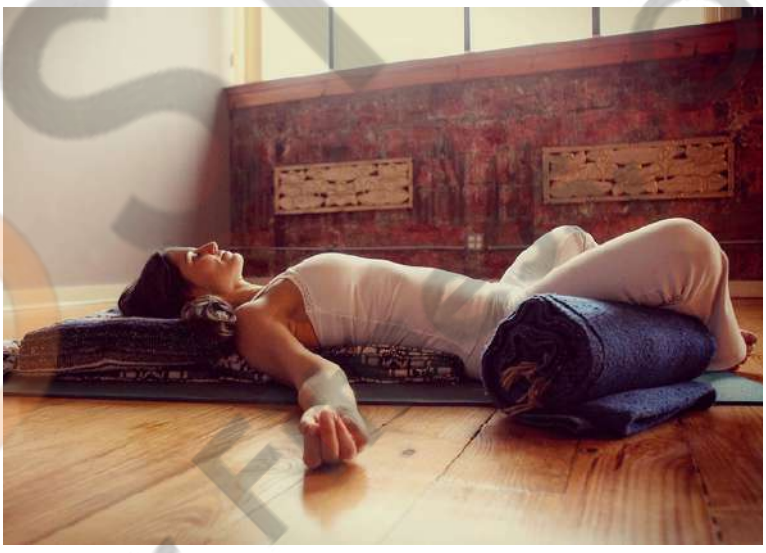
Yin and yang descriptions of any object are relative. The description varies as different aspects are considered. For example, when considering location, the heart is yin to the breastbone because it is more inside, more hidden. But when considering movement, the heart is yang to the breastbone because it is more mobile.

It can be difficult to determine which aspect of an object should be called yin and which should be called yang. For example, a room is made of walls and the space the walls enclose. We could say the walls are yin because they are solid and the space is yang because it is empty; or we could say the walls are yang because they are what we see and the space is yin because it is not directly perceivable. Even though it is troublesome to determine which is yin and which is yang it is not difficult to appreciate that walls and space are "yin - yang" to each other.

Yang

Light / Hot / Active / Hollow / Rapid / Bright / Upward / Function / Fire / Energy / Male / Sun / Day / Elastic

Yin



Dark / Cold / Passive / Solid / Slow / Dim / Downward / Substance / Water / Matter / Female/ Moon / Night / Plastic

There is no single style of yoga that can be called "yin". All styles of yoga can be described in yin-yang relation to each other and this categorization will change depending on which aspect of yoga practice is considered. If we are basing our distinction on movement-stillness, then the style with the most movement is yang. But if we are basing our distinction on effort-ease, then a strong series of static inversions might be more yang than a gentle, flowing style of yoga. Context is everything!

In this training our context is the elasticity of the tissues.

Any physical practice that involves rhythmic movement and engages muscles can be considered a Yang practice (running, biking, or hiking). Yang yoga practices primarily target strengthening and lengthening muscles; this includes all kinds of Hatha yoga styles (Iyengar, Ashtanga, etc).

A practice that is mainly stationary and allows many of the muscle groups to soften, while exposing the joints to pressure as the skeleton is pulled apart, can be considered a Yin practice; the longer the body is still, the more the chi becomes concentrated in the deeper yin tissues (bones and ligaments).

Neither way is better, and ideally, we learn to be skillful in both, allowing these complementary practices to enhance our capacity for body-mind vitality and integrity.

For the Taoism, harmony and health are created when conditions arise where the contrasting aspects are in balance.

Modern Yin-sters

Paul Grilley is the teacher known for popularizing the term Yin Yoga in the Western world; so, let's take a look at the journey that allowed Grilley to systematize what we know today as Yin Yoga.

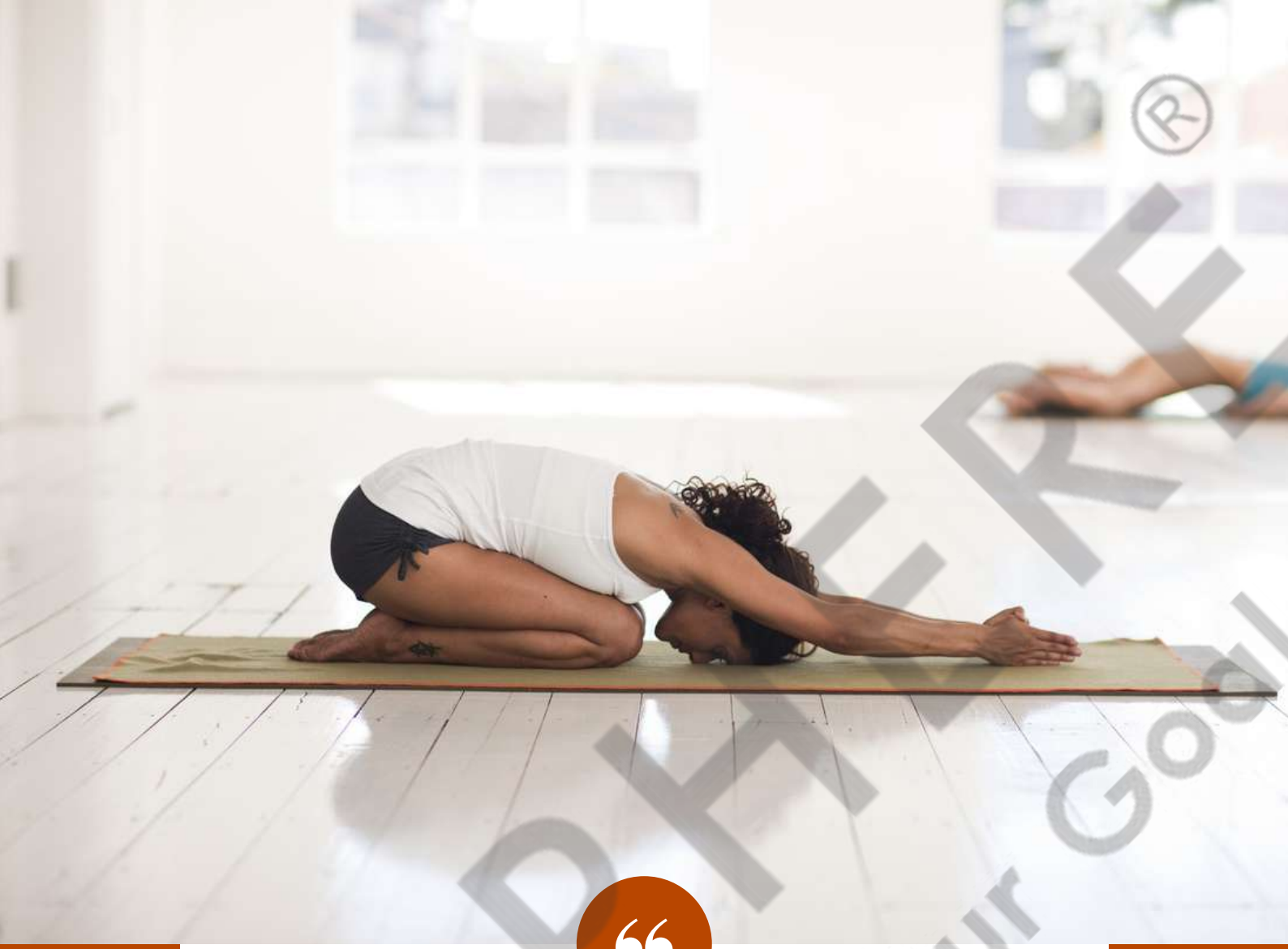
The Three Threads of Recent History

Grilley was inspired by three people who represent the three threads that are woven in Yin Yoga.

Dr. Garry Parker taught him anatomy and the scientific principles of human movement, and encouraged Grilley to start teaching yoga in 1980. It was because of him that Grilley acquired the concepts and vocabulary to competently study anatomy on his own. Paul's view of yoga was shaped by anatomy from the beginning.

The second person is Paulie Zink, a martial arts expert and teacher of Taoist Yoga. Paulie practiced poses for five to ten minutes at a time, chatting contentedly as he led the class. After nearly two hours of floor poses, they would stand and do some moving yang forms that imitated the movements of animals. All this was very different from the hatha yoga Grilley was teaching. Paul trained with Paulie for about a year. By then, Grilley had understood the simple principles of yin yoga and his interests were in the floor poses more than anything else. Paul started teaching long, slow hold floor postures in his hatha yoga classes. And out of respect for Paulie Zink, Grilley called this style "Taoist Yoga", name that he used for ten years.

In 1990, Paul became Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama's student. Motoyama was a Shinto priest and had doctorates in philosophy and physiological psychology. He had demonstrated objectively -in experiments- the existence of both chakras and meridians. Dr. Motoyama has demonstrated that the meridian of acupuncture are water- rich channels in the connective tissues that interpenetrate all the structures of the body, which confirms ancient theories and illuminates why the system of yoga postures was developed and how they work.



Live in harmony with the way and you will benefit. Struggle against the way things are and you will suffer.

BERNIE CLARK

The Three Threads of Recent History

As mentioned above, the three threads of Paul Grilley's Yin Yoga are:

- The Anatomy from Dr. Parker
- The Practice from Paulie Zink
- The Meridian theory of Dr. Motoyama

But the name "yin yoga" didn't originate with any of them.In the year 2000, Sarah Powers and her husband attended a Taoist Yoga workshop taught by Paul Grilley. After that workshop, she began introducing long, slow poses into her classes, explaining that the flowing standing poses were the yang of her practice, and the long floor poses were the yin. When students asked where to get more information about the yin practice, she referred them to Paul Grilley, who wrote a manual on "Taoist Yoga", but it looked inappropriate to Paul to publish it as "Taoist Yoga" since a book with that name should outline both yin and yang training, so he published the book as Yin Yoga: Outline of a Quiet Practice.

But Paulie Zink, Paul Grilley and Sarah Powers have taught Yin Yoga which has always existed in the ancient Yogic Tradition. So, is Yin Yoga really a new style of Yoga?

True History of Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga is not at all new. To understand the need for making this distinction, we need a brief history of yoga.

Let's explore the true history of Yin Yoga. **We must know the Ancient Siddha Tradition because the Philosophy of Yin Yoga has originated from there.**

Tamil Nadu is a state of India, located in the extreme south of the subcontinent. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the east and south and by the states of Kerala to the west, Karnataka (formerly Mysore) to the northwest, and Andhra Pradesh to the north.

Tamil culture is expressed in language, literature, music, dance, theatre, folk arts, martial arts, painting and so many other fields.

Siddha medicine, traditional system of healing that originated in South India and is considered to be one of India's oldest systems of medicine. The Siddha system is based on a combination of ancient medicinal practices and spiritual disciplines as well as alchemy and mysticism.

Siddha medicine appears as part of Tamil culture in the earliest Tamil writings and Practitioners of Siddha medicine are known as siddhars (or siddhas).
The Siddhar in Tamil tradition is a perfected individual, who has attained spiritual powers called siddhi.

Historically, Siddhar also refers to the people who were early age wandering adepts that dominated ancient Tamil teaching and philosophy. They were knowledgeable in science, technology, astronomy, literature, fine arts, music

It is very important to know 2 names:

- **Siddha Kalangi Nath**
- **Siddha Boganathar**

Kalangi Nathar was the guru of Bogar (or Boganathar). Kalangi Nathar was from Benaras. Kalangi Nathar and Bogar were considered to possess an ideal master and student relationship. It is said that they had a mutual care among both of them in their own spiritual progresses. Kalangi Nathar, especially took more care and strain towards the spiritual advancement of his disciple bogar. Kalangi Nathar was behind Bogar's every development and his innovations for the world.

Kalangi Nath was in China to spread the knowledge.
One day, Kalangi Nathar summoned Bogar to China telepathically, as he decided to enter into samadhi. Bogar was to take over Kalangi's mission there. Some writings suggests a sea travel while others claim Bogar reached China by astral means. There Kalangi instructed Bogar in all aspects of the Siddha sciences including 'kaya kalpa' herbal formulae to promote longevity. Thereafter Kalangi is said to have entered into trance.

Bogar is said to have assumed the name of Bo-yang after he took over his Guru's seat. It is said he transmigrated his vital body into the physical body of a deceased Chinese man and called himself **Bo-yang.**

The name Bo-yang is derived from 'Bhogam' meaning material and spiritual bliss. It refers to the experience of Kundalini shakti, the feminine primordial 'Yin' energy which awakens when it passes up to the crown of the head, the seat of Shiva, the masculine 'Yang' pole, in the Sahasrara Chakra at the summit of the head and unites with it. The result of this integration of feminine and masculine parts of the being, is yoga of Shakti and Shiva, Yin and Yang. This Satchitananda state was unknown in China. Bogar brought this to light there.
But who is Bo-yang really?

The kaya kalpa formulae that gave Bhogar lustrous body, pranayama techniques and kundalini yoga with Yin and Yang perspectives point to contemporaneously points to another parallel **Chinese figure – Lao Tse. There are many writings that Bo-Yang is none other than Lao Tse.**

He was the founder of Taoism of the 5th century B.C. He too propounded the theory of duality of matter; Yin and Yang conforming to Siddha Shiva-Shakti doctrine.

In China, Bogarnath came to be known as Bo-Yang and Lao-Tse.

“

THE YOGA POSTURES BRING HAPPINESS WITH THEM.
IT IS CONTENTMENT, RICHNESS,FULLNESS.

”

Paul Grilley

SPHERE®

Finding Your Edge

The first principle of the practice of Yin Yoga is to come into the chosen shape to an appropriate edge. This means coming into poses non-aggressively and sensitively, allowing the breath to remain slow and unelaborated so we can detect the appropriate depth of sensation that we feel we can tolerate. If we attempt to take on too much intensity too soon, our inner state or mood of resistance will actually hinder the chi flow, causing more energetic disruptions. If, on the other hand, we do not exert enough tension, avoiding any strong sensations, we do not allow these areas to expand into their full ranges of motion.

If we are working on an area that is fragile, injured, or hypermobile, we need to do two things:

- We should merely suggest the shape, coming into the pose just enough to stimulate chi flow without any feeling of strain.
- We need to remain highly focused on the sensations promoted by the pose, thereby refining our meditative attention, while relaxing the rigidity around the painful joint. Of course, we may also need to use props; allowing for modifications and variations to support damaged or destabilized areas.

Being Still

The second tenet to help nourish the joints is to become still and muscularly soft, allowing gravity to have us. Whenever we move, the chi flows more predominantly in the muscles and fascia. During a Yin practice, we intent to pool chi in the bones and joints, which requires that we diminish movement and settle into the pose. Of course, there will be times when we feel our tissues moistening and naturally drop deeper into a pose. At other times, we may concede that we have gone too far too soon and need to back off. These kinds of adjustments are certainly appropriate. We may also feel our legs falling asleep at times and may want to come out to massage the area and bring it back to life before returning to the pose.

The lengthy postural steadiness allows us to develop yin qualities of surrender and observance, a willingness to feel a greater tolerance for uncomfortable experiences. After doing many Yin poses strung together, you may find that a feeling commonly develops that is similar to the effect of a long acupuncture session. Your body may begin to feel very relaxed and at ease, while your mind feels a heightened sense of clarity and restfulness.

Holding the Pose

The third tenet is to hold each pose for a while so as to fully nourish the meridians. As with acupuncture, we want to coax the chi into particular pathways, helping to engorge the respective organs with refined energy. This takes some time and patience. When you practice (or when you teach), you can set a timer so you can let go of wondering how long it has been, freeing your mind to connect to the present moment more easily. For brand-new beginners to this practice, it's suggested one to three minutes in each pose, although five minutes is a good length to hold each pose. It is just becoming challenging for people at three minutes, and the extra two-minute intensity can be a wonderful training ground for cultivating a broader capacity to stay with unpleasant sensations (as long as it does not feel risky).

Yin Yoga vs Restorative Yoga

Yin Yoga is not restorative yoga. Like all yoga practices, if the tissues you are targeting for exercise are damaged in some way, please give yourself a chance to heal before resuming your regular practice.

Restorative Yoga is mainly for practitioners suffering from injuries, stress, or illness, who therefore require a yoga practice that can bring them back to a better quality of life; classes are necessarily small so that each person can receive detailed attention to ensure they are safe and properly supported.

In Yin Yoga, props can be used but are not necessary if we know how to adapt and modify the poses for each practitioner. In Restorative Yoga, the long holding of poses is often assisted with props such as folded blankets, bolsters, blocks and straps to ensure the body is fully supported and so to allow the muscles to fully relax.

Both styles are practiced mainly on the floor, at a slow pace, and poses are held for longer than other styles; however, the purpose of the practice is different. Yin Yoga poses are meant to stress the target areas in order to reach the deep layers of connective tissue, by using the form (asana) made by the own body of healthy practitioners (with no active injuries), while Restorative Yoga poses are intended to allow the body to relax completely, with no stress anywhere, supporting all the muscles with props, so the passive healing of active injuries can happen.

Benefits of Yin Yoga

Now that we have looked at what is Yin Yoga, let's see why we would want to do this form of practice. We will look at the benefits of Yin Yoga in three major areas: physical, energetic, and mental/emotional.

Physical Benefits

- Improve our range of motion and flexibility.
- Passively lengthen our muscles through stressing the fascial bags that wrap the muscle fibers. This can be especially useful for the larger, more stubborn muscle groups such as the hamstrings and adductors.
- Reduce adhesions, which restrict movement between the sliding surfaces or our muscles.
- Stimulate growth of fibroblasts, which are the cells responsible for creating collagen, elastin, and the water-loving molecules that hydrate our tissues and joints.
- Make our ligaments thicker and stronger through greater collagen production.

- Improve lubrication through greater hydration of our tissues, which allows joints to move and fascia to slide more easily.
- Keep our skin younger looking through hydration, which provides room for cells to migrate through the extracellular matrix.
- Compress the extracellular matrix to liquify the ground substance, which is often in a gel-like state, allowing toxins to flow out of the tissues.
- Stimulate the chondrocytes and osteoblasts, which create cartilage and bone, helping to reduce degeneration of these tissues.
- Re-establish the normal lordotic curves in the spine, specifically in the lumbar but also in the cervical spine.
- Prevent or reduce contracture, where the ligaments and the joint capsule shrink and reduce the joint's mobility.
- Reduce osteopenia and osteoporosis, which are dangerous reductions in bone density.
- Reduce fixation, a condition that limits the movement of our joints, and thus prevents fusion, a permanent loss of mobility in the joint.

Energetic Benefits

- Yin Yoga poses will reduce stress, activate your rest-and-digest system, improve your heart and lung function, lower blood pressure, and lead to a healthier and happier life.
- Awaken, enhance, and balance prana.
- Slow the whirling thoughts of the mind.
- Stimulate and awaken the kundalini energy.
- Stimulate the production and flow of Chi energy.
- Nourish the organs through acupressure via compression of the meridian lines.
- Replenish the store of Jing in our Kidneys, which in turn helps all our Organs function properly.
- Create internal pulsed magnetic fields that can restore cellular health.
- Turn off the sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight) and turn on the parasympathetic nervous system(rest-and-digest).

Mental / Emotional Benefits

The act of practicing presence, of being mindful of what is happening right now, can help us physiologically, energetically, and mentally/emotionally.

- Our stress begins to evaporate as soon as we pay attention to our breath and allow it to slow down.
- When our stress level declines, we reap many health benefits: our blood pressure drops, heart rate slows, immune system reactivates, digestion improves, and inflammation decreases.
- By paying attention to the sensations within, we can stimulate and enhance energy movement.
- And, by being present, we can choose to change our brain.
- In Yin Yoga we come to an edge in a pose and become still. While we hold the pose, we go within. We start to notice what is going on in life, right here, right now – without adding any drama, without taking anything away from the experience. With clarity we see what is really needed, beyond the cravings and aversions that normally move us. We are now free to create a new response, and over time build new paths to follow.

“THE QUIETER YOU BECOME, THE MORE YOU CAN HEAR.”

Ram Dass

The Practice of Yin Yoga

How we practice is much more important than what we practice. Too often, yoga students force themselves into contorted positions with no regard for whether what they are doing is helping them or hurting them. Yoga was never a competitive sport, it is an inward practice designed to build awareness, non-attachment, equanimity, and contentment. *We do not use the body to get into the pose, we use the pose to get into the body*. Practiced correctly, yoga can provide all the physiological benefits while offering the deep inner calm and insights treasured by the ancient yogis. We simply have to practice mindfully, with *attention and intention*.

When to Practice Yin Yoga

We have many options for when to practice Yin Yoga, depending on what we would like to achieve through our practice. It comes down to our intention.

- When our muscles are cool (so they don't steal the stress away from the deeper tissues)
- Early in the morning (when the muscles are more likely to be cool)
- Later in the evening before bed (to calm the mind before sleep)
- Before an active yang practice (before muscles become too warm up)
- In the spring or summer (to balance the natural yang time of the year)
- When life has become very hectic (to balance the yang energies in our lives)
- After a long trip (traveling is very yang)
- During a woman's menstrual cycle (to conserve energies)

We could set different intentions for our Yin Yoga practice.

- To maximize the physiological benefits of our practice.
- To work into our joints and connective tissues.
- To maximize the emotional or psychological benefits.
- To deepen our mindfulness practice.
- To work on our energy body.
- To increase the flows of energy.
- To remove blockages of energy.

Depending upon which intention we set, the best time to practice will vary. On the other hand, a yin practice is not recommended when we have already been very placid. After sitting at a desk for eight hours in a dull winter's day, a more active practice may create balance much better than a yin practice. Listening to your inner guide may give you the best answer to when to practice Yin Yoga.

Before You Practice

Even though Yin Yoga is considered a gentler practice than yang practices, it is still important to consider the most common precautions. The following is not an exhaustive list, but it will give you an idea of these precautions.

- If you (or your students) are pregnant or have serious health concerns such as joint injury, recent surgery, epilepsy, diabetes, or any cardiovascular disease, be sure to discuss your intention to practice yoga with your doctor.
- Do not eat anything for at least one to two hours beforehand, and no big meals at least three hours before you practice.
- Before you begin it is nice to have a shower. Empty your bowels and bladder.
- If you are practicing in the morning, give yourself at least thirty minutes after rising before starting any yoga practice.
- If you are already physically exhausted, keep the practice very brief and gentle.
- Avoid practice if you have had a lot of sun that day.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing so that the body is not restricted.

- You will not generate heat internally, so fell free to wear extra layers of clothes and socks. Keep the room a little warmer than normal.
- Have the props that you may need, especially to sit up on for meditation.
- Remove obvious distractions.
- Avoid cold flowing air.
- Above all, practice in a relaxed manner.

During the Practice

Practice according to the three principles discussed previously:

- Come into the pose to an appropriate depth.
- Resolve to remain still (stillness of the body, the breath, and the mind).
- Hold the pose for some time.

Remembering these three principles as you practice will simplify everything. For the practice of Yin Yoga, you or your students may have doubts regarding how deep to go, for how long to stay in the pose, and how often should you practice.

How Deep?

Everybody is different, but in general, every stress of tissue brings down the tolerance level of that tissue. This is what exercise is all about: We stress tissues to make them weaker, at least initially. Once we release the stress, the tissues recover and become stronger. If we apply too much stress, or hold for too long, or do not allow enough rest, then we could expose these tissues to danger. Remember that to go deeper in Yin Yoga means to hold longer, not necessarily to move further into a pose. Also remember that you can do too much of anything. Don't hold your Yin Yoga poses so long that you start exceeding your tissues' tolerance levels. Find the middle path.

How Long?

As important as it is to find the right depth, we also have to consider how long to stay in the pose to get optimal health benefits. In the section of asanas, you will find some recommended lengths of time to hold each pose: Beginners should start at the shorter end of the range, except for those who are already quite flexible and open. Some students can stay much longer; others may need to come out earlier.

When you practice on your own, It is a good idea to use a timer or a stopwatch, three to five minutes may work. You may find that some postures allow you to remain in the pose longer than others, and this is all right. Our bodies are not uniformly open. It may be better to stay in a challenging pose, like Saddle, for less time than in a simpler pose, like Butterfly. If you are struggling to remain in a pose, come out regardless of whether the timer has sounded or not.

How Often?

During our yin practice we create microscopic damage to our connective tissues, and we do want time to allow this to heal and become stronger, but studies have shown that we do not have to wait days between practices to allow this healing to take place. When we are young, we are in the yang time of life and have lots of mobility: what we need when we are young is stability. We need yang exercises. As we age and get older, we move into the yin time of life and we get stiffer: what we need when we are older is mobility. The older we get, the more we should be doing Yin Yoga every day.

Ending the Practice

While we do not need to cool down, we do want to restore the body to neutrality. Once we have completed our last pose, it is time for rest and then a transition back to the world. The rest period is called *Savasana*. There are two part to any exercise: Stressing the body and Resting the body. Most teachers and students spend a lot of time learning how to stress the body. Equally important is Savasana: the relaxation period at the end. Unfortunately, too many people are unaware of the need to balance stress with rest, and they may skip their Savasana. Or they may shorten it too much; better to shorten the other asanas and keep the full amount of time available for Savasana.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

According to the tradition of Chinese medicine, our organs are not only physiological structures, but are functions themselves. These functions are exercised throughout the body, and not just in a specific area, including every cell that makes up our physical body. Just as the body needs oxygen, and eliminate waste; the cells also need the same. In this way, the function of breathing (through the lungs) and elimination (through the kidneys) –for example– occur in each part of the body.

As a way of distinguishing their model from the Western model, Chinese doctors refer to the function of the organ with a capital initial letter, in order to differentiate it from the physical organ. In this way, when they write Kidney with a capital "K" we know that the function of that organ is being discussed.

Chinese medicine bases the functions of the body on five solid organs: Heart, Spleen, Lungs, Liver, and Kidneys, also called Zang organs. Since everything in life requires the balance between yin and yang, these solid organs have their yang counterpart in the hollow organs: Urinary Bladder, Gall Bladder, Small Intestines, Large Intestines, and Stomach (also known as Fu organs). Each of these pairs of organs is connected through the meridians. In turn, each solid organ is associated with one of the five elements of Taoist cosmology: Earth, Wood, Water, Fire and Metal, and through these elements are connected to emotions.

Kindly refer to the "PDF - Meridian System" provided to you.

> Where there is no movement, there is pain. Where there is movement, there is no pain.
>
> *Traditional Chinese Saying*

Meridians System

The primordial energy, or chi, as explained above, is the vital force in all life and is the foundation of all vitality. It is inseparable from movement and change, and it is thought to be what causes the planets to rotate, our brains to think, and our hearts to beat.

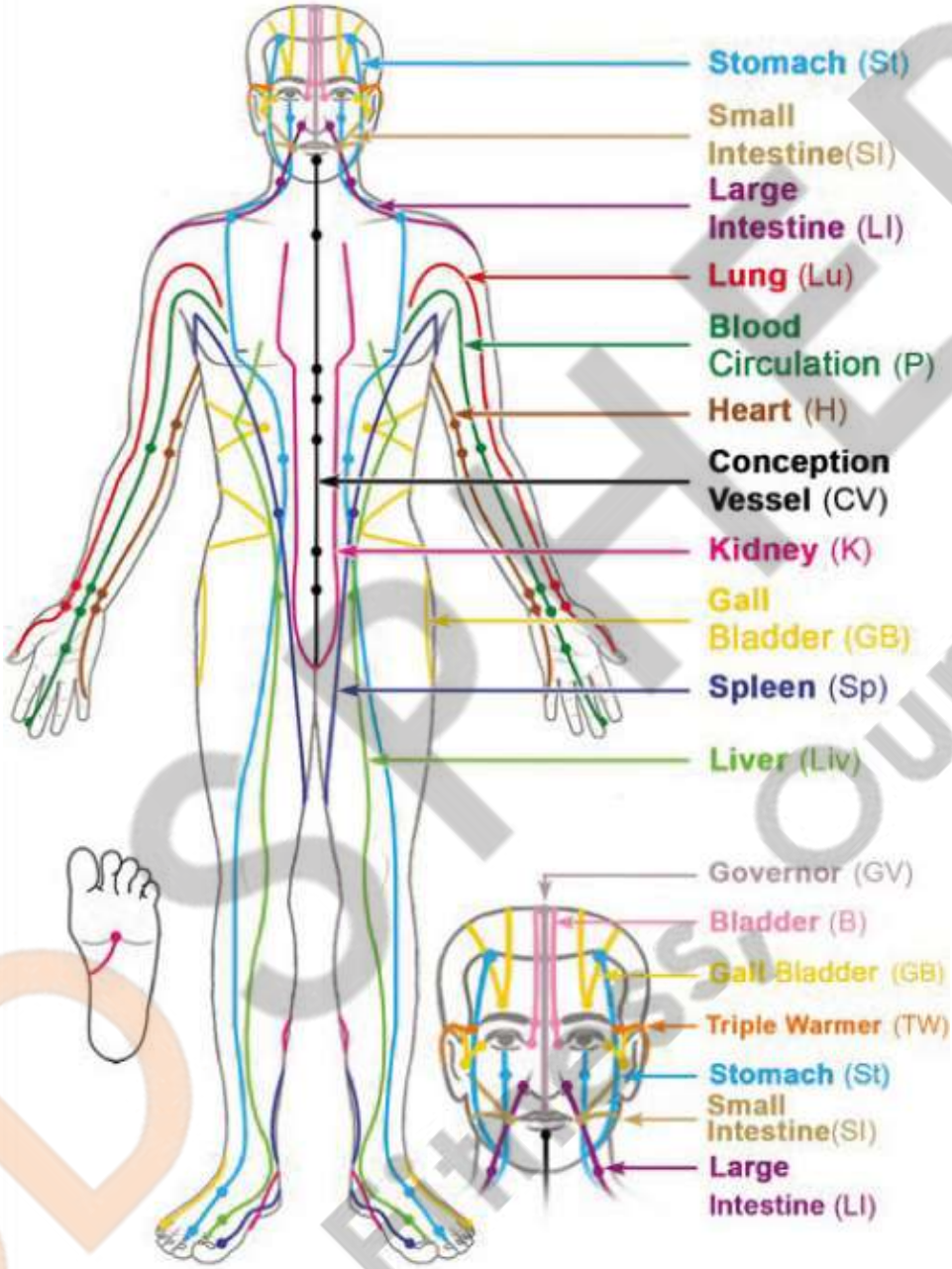
This activating energy flows through the body in particular invisible pathways called *meridians* (Chinese system), or *nadis* (Indian system), like rivers of energy that create a comprehensive network that interconnects and encapsulates the tissues and organs in the human body. These meridians flow through all tissues and bones, moistening the joints and connecting the interior of the body with the exterior.

The strength and flow of the meridian system is essential for the harmonious balance in our body and mind. Energy that is weak and lacks vibrancy is called *deficient chi*, while energy that flows in distorted patterns of movement is called *stagnant chi*. *Healthy chi* has the complementary qualities of stable strength and smooth mobility.

There are four specific ways to assist the migration of chi:

- Inserting needles at particular points on the body along the meridians where chi collects and/or disperse (basis of the ancient system of acupuncture).
- Placing the body in particular shapes to both pull on and pressurize tissues. This effort elicits the body's natural repair response, coaxing chi and blood to flood into these sites, making them stronger and better lubricated.
- Lengthening and deepening the breath. By controlling the breath (pranayama), we oxygenate the blood while increasingthe flow of prana into more harmonious patterns of distribution.
- The fourth way to stimulate chi is the most direct and often the most difficult method. It relates to the focus of mind we bring to our movements. Our state of mind is directly related to the quality of our energy body.

A balanced yoga practice can potentially comprise the last three methods of chi enhancement: doing poses to stimulate the muscles, blood, and meridians housed in the connective tissues; engaging in conscious, slow breathing to regulate the nervous system and amplify the quality of energy; and focusing the mind while disentangling consciousness from distractions.


Stomach (St)
Small Intestine(SI)
Large Intestine (LI)
Lung (Lu)
Blood Circulation (P)
Heart (H)
Conception Vessel (CV)
Kidney (K)
Gall Bladder (GB)
Spleen (Sp)
Liver (Liv)
Governor (GV)
Bladder (B)
Gall Bladder (GB)
Triple Warmer (TW)
Stomach (St)
Small Intestine(SI)
Large Intestine (LI)

The Meridians

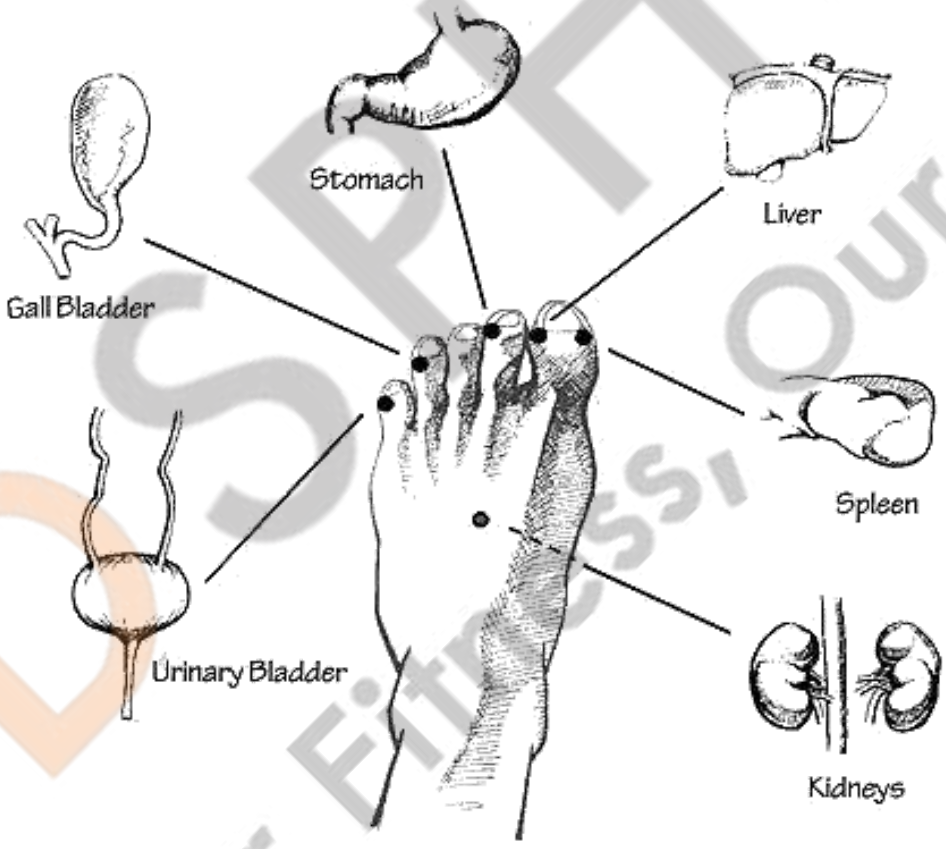
There are fourteen major meridians, twelve of which are considered regular and can be positively affected by doing yoga poses. These twelve yin and yang meridians are specifically connected to six yin-yang pairs of organs:

- The kidneys (yin) are paired with the urinary bladder (yang)
- The liver (yin) with the gallbladder (yang)
- The spleen (yin) withthe stomach (yang)
- The lungs (yin) with the large intestine (yang)
- The heart (yin) with the small intestine (yang)
- The pericardium –the sac around the heart- (yin) with the triple heater (yang)

The two other meridians described as major channels not connected with particular organs run along the centre of the torso and together control the yin and yang of the whole body. They are called the *Governor Vessel and the Conception Vessel*.

The Lower Body Meridians

The six meridians that begin or end in the lower body are the lines affected the most by the yin asanas, since these postures are practiced mainly seated or lying down on the floor. The external trajectory of these six channels, either begin or end on the feet.



Three of these six meridians are considered yin, since they start on the toes and their energy rise up: The Spleen, the Kidney, and the Liver meridians. These meridians are paired with their yang homologue channels (their energy flows down and ends up in the toes): The Stomach, the Urinary Bladder, and the Gall Bladder meridians, respectively.

Kindly refer to the "PDF - Meridian System" provided to you.

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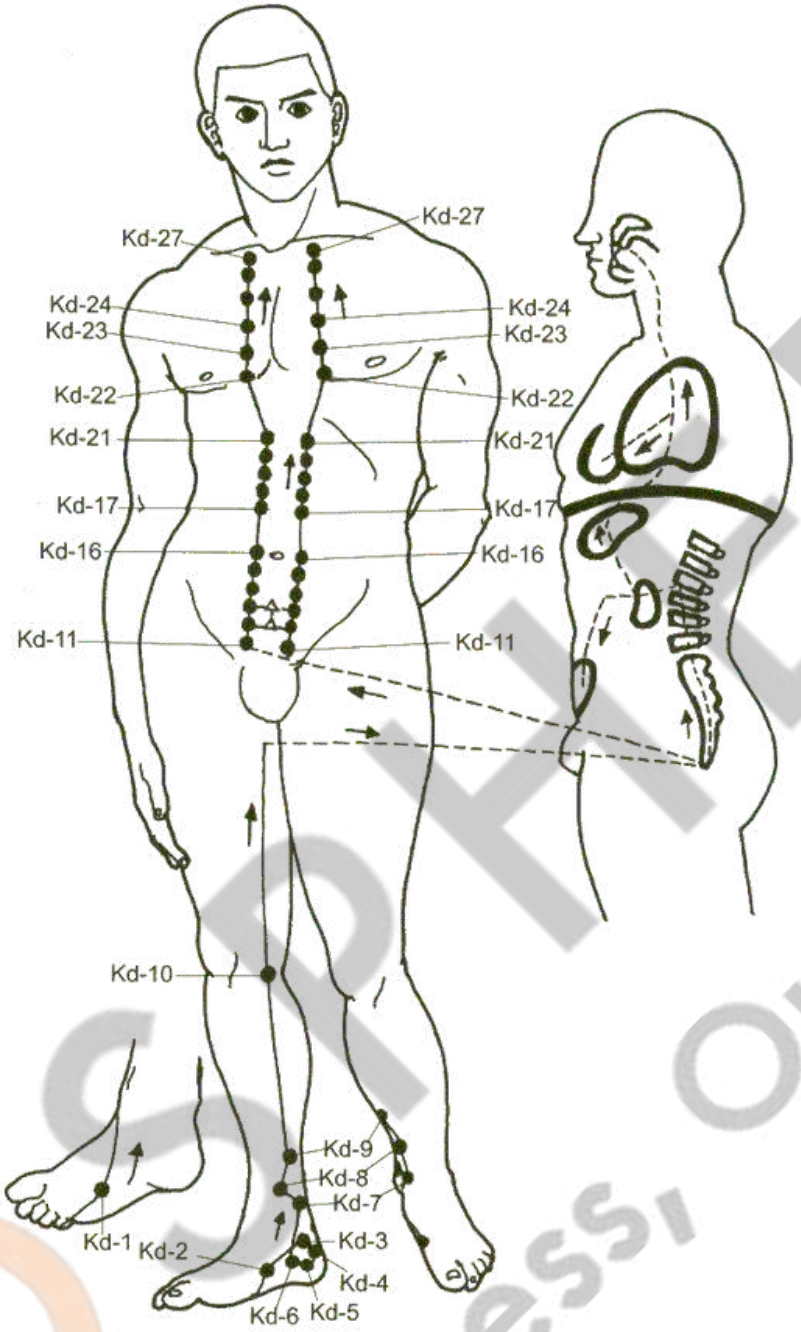
The Kidneys (yin) and Urinary Bladder (yang)

The Kidney-Bladder pairs of meridians and organs are the foundation of Yin and Yang balance for all the other organs, in Chinese medicine.

The Kidney Meridian

It begins at the outside of the little toe and immediately goes under the sole of the foot. It follows the arch, makes a circle around the inner ankle and then it runs through the heel, and comes up the inmost (medial) side of the leg (just beneath the Liver meridian) and into the tailbone. It follows the spine to the kidney and then branches. One branch heads to the Urinary Bladder, where it comes back to the surface of the abdomen and up the chest, ending at the clavicle. The other branch touches the liver and diaphragm and moves up through the lungs and throat until it ends beside the root of the tongue.

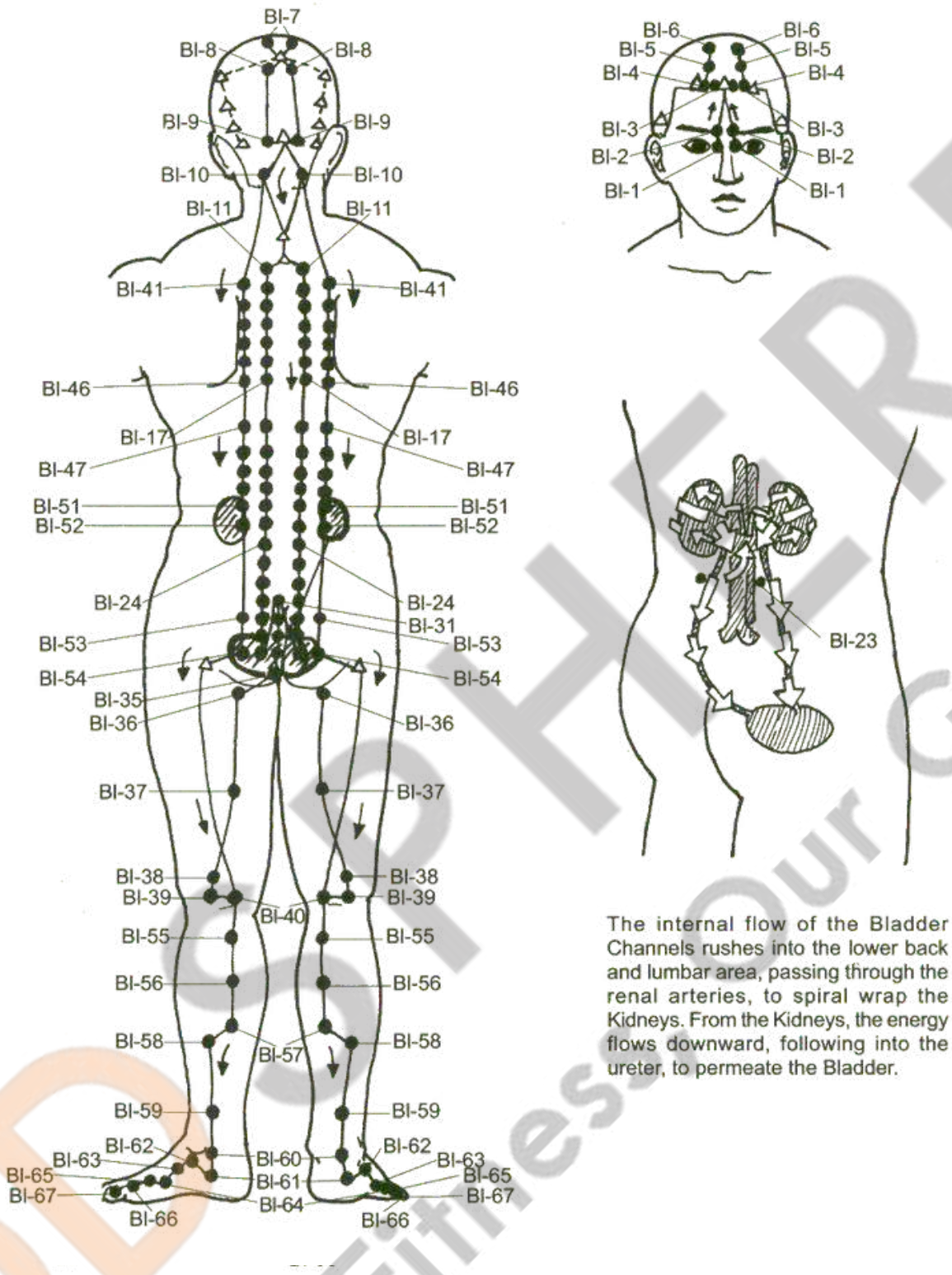


The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Kidney (Kd) Channels

Disharmony of the Kidney meridian is suggested by gynaecological problems, genital disorders, and problems in the kidneys, lungs, and throat. Examples may include impotence, frequent urination, and weakness in the lower limbs. Emotional problems may also occur related to anxiety and fear.

The Urinary Bladder Meridian

Like the Gallbladder meridian, the Urinary Bladder Meridian also begins at the eye. The Urinary Bladder line starts at the inner eye and then goes up, across the forehead, to the crown. One branch splits here, enters the brain, and then re-emerges at the scapula and runs just inside the line of the scapula down the spine to the buttocks, where it re- enters the body and runs to the urinary bladder and the kidney. The second branch from the crown flows down the back of the neck and shoulder and runs just outside and parallel to the first branch. This branch continues down the back of the buttocks and legs, circles the outer ankle, runs along the outer edge of the foot, and ends in the small toe where the Kidney meridian begins. Dr. Motoyama believes that the Ida and pingala nadis correspond to the Urinary Bladder meridians, because they run along either side of the spine.



The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Bladder (BI) Channels

Signs of disharmony in the Urinary Bladder may include backaches, headaches, an inability to urinate, mental problems, and disease of the lower limbs.

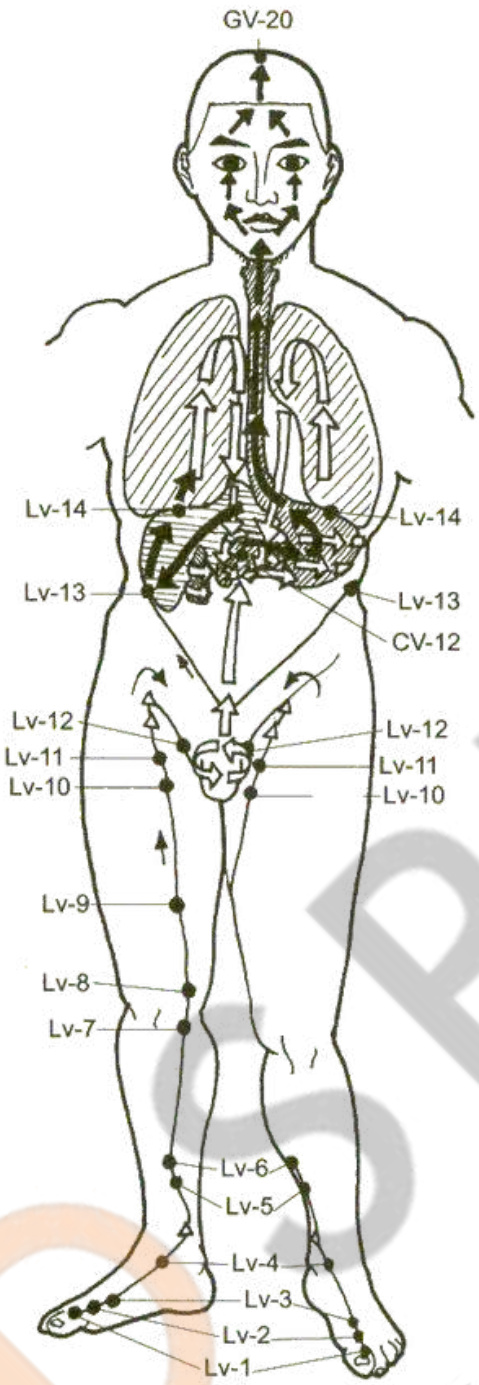
The Liver (yin) and the Gallbladder (yang)

The Liver (yin) and the Gallbladder (yang)

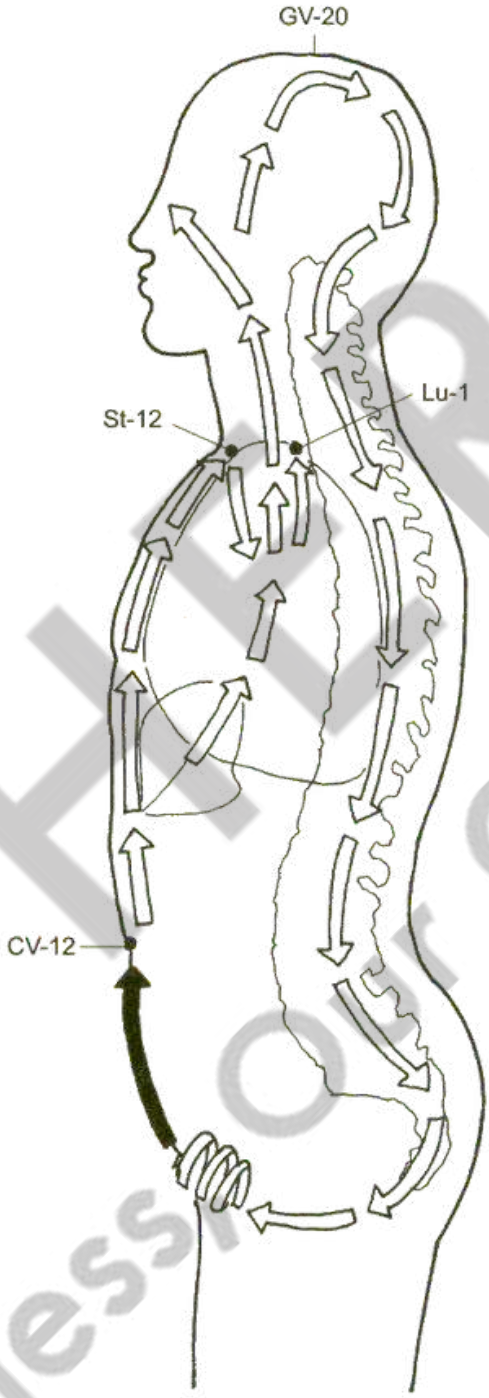
The liver commanded particular respect among the ancients, who considered it the seat of life. The Old English word is lifer, meaning “to live”.

The Liver Meridian

The Liver Meridian begins at the inside of the nail of the big toe and runs along the top of the foot. It climbs the front of the ankle and then runs up the inside (medial) part of the leg (running just beneath the Spleen meridian) until it reaches the pubic area. From here it curves around the external genitalia and goes into the lower abdomen where it enters into the liver and the gall bladder. Rising higher, it branches in several directions, with one branch connecting to the Lung meridian. Rising still higher, the Liver meridian follows the throat and connects with the eyes before branching again. One branch reaches down across the cheeks and circles the lips, while a higher branch goes across the forehead to the crown where it links with the Governor Vessel meridian.



The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Liver (Lv) Channels

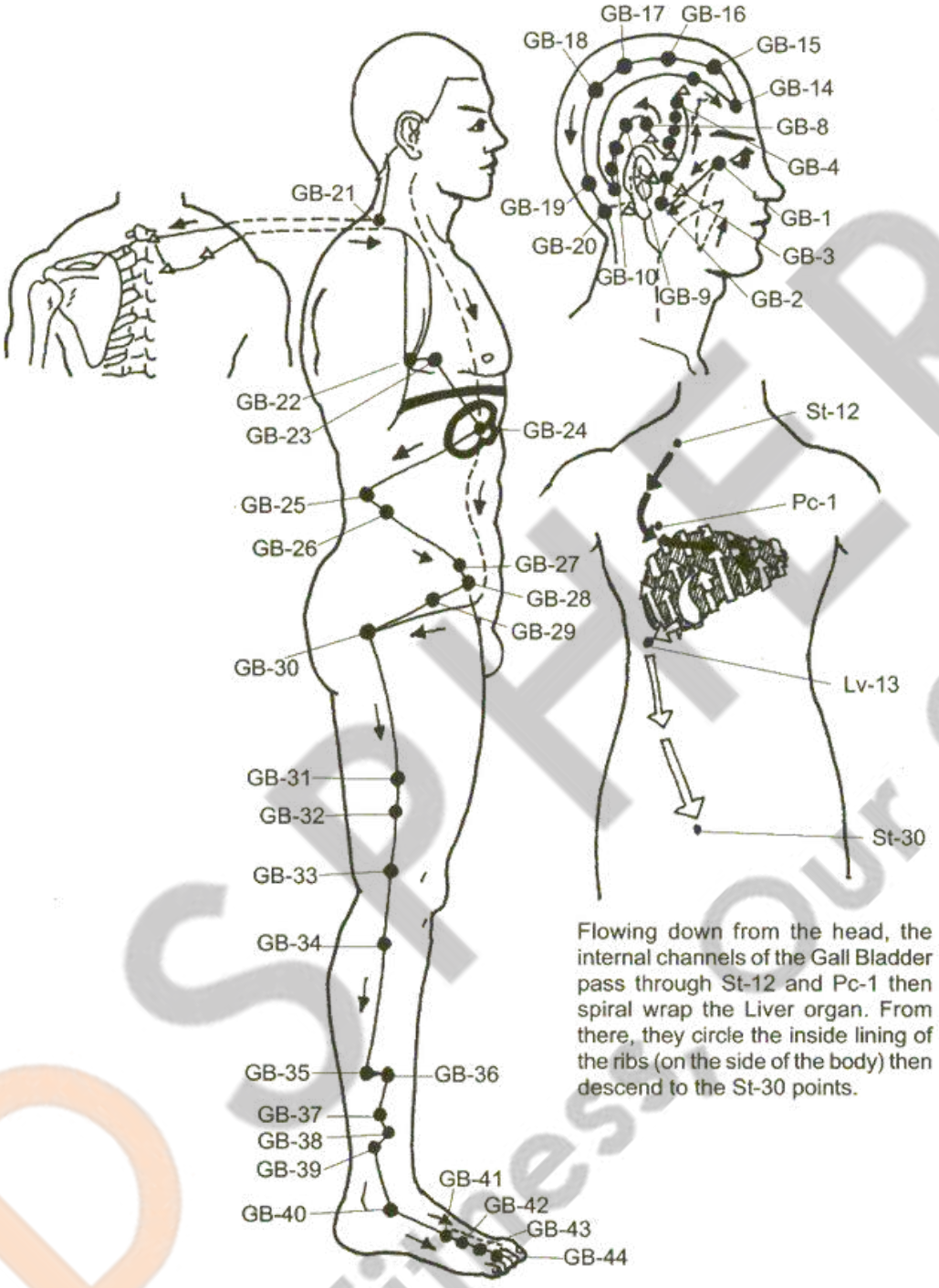


Side View of the Liver Channel's Internal Flow of Energy

Lower back pain, abdominal pain, or mental disturbances may be a sign of disharmony of the Liver. Frequent or unreasonable anger or irritation may also be a sign of dysfunction here.

The Gallbladder Meridian

The Gallbladder Meridian begins at the outer corner of the eye (close to the Liver meridian, which passes through the centre of the eye) and immediately branches into two lines. A main branch remains on the surface and winds back and forth across the side of the head and above the ear, before turning downward along the side of the neck. After following the top of the shoulder, it passes under the arm and zigzags along the side of the ribs to the hips. The other branch goes inside the cheek and descends to the liver and gall bladder. From there it descends farther and emerges in time to re-join the first branch at the front of the hip. The single line then descends, running along the outside (lateral) thigh and knee until it reaches the ankle. It runs across the top of the foot until it reaches the fourth toe; however, another branch leaves at the ankle to run across the top of the foot and join the Liver meridian at the big toe.



Flowing down from the head, the internal channels of the Gall Bladder pass through St-12 and Pc-1 then spiral wrap the Liver organ. From there, they circle the inside lining of the ribs (on the side of the body) then descend to the St-30 points.

The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Gall Bladder (GB) Channels

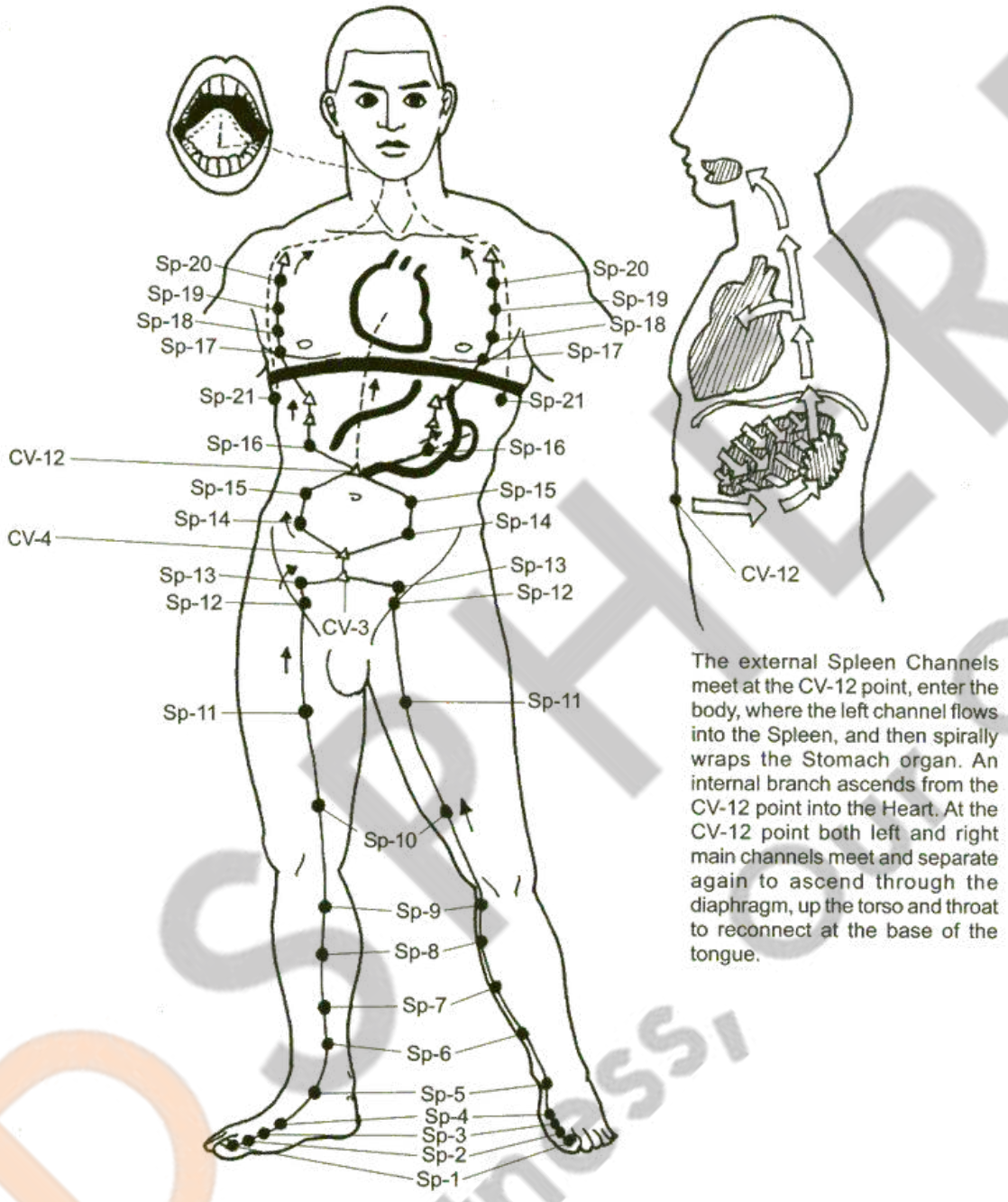
Headache, blurred vision, and pains along the side of the body including the eyes, ears, and throat may be an indication of problems with the Gallbladder meridian.

The Spleen (yin) and the Stomach (yang)

The spleen and stomach are the two organs most affected by our diet.As is true with the other organ-meridian pairs, the spleen and stomach have different physicalfunctions but similarenergetic, mental and emotional characteristics.

Spleen Meridian

Starting at the inside of the big toe, the Spleen meridian runs along the inside of the foot, then turns and runs up the inside of the ankle and the shin. It runs just in front of the Liver meridian and enters the abdominal cavity, just above the pubic bone. It connects to the spleen and then the stomach, where it branches. The main branch comes to the surface and runs up the chest to the throat where it again enters the body, going to the root of the tongue, where it spreads out. The second branch remains internal and reaches the heart, connecting to the Heart meridian.



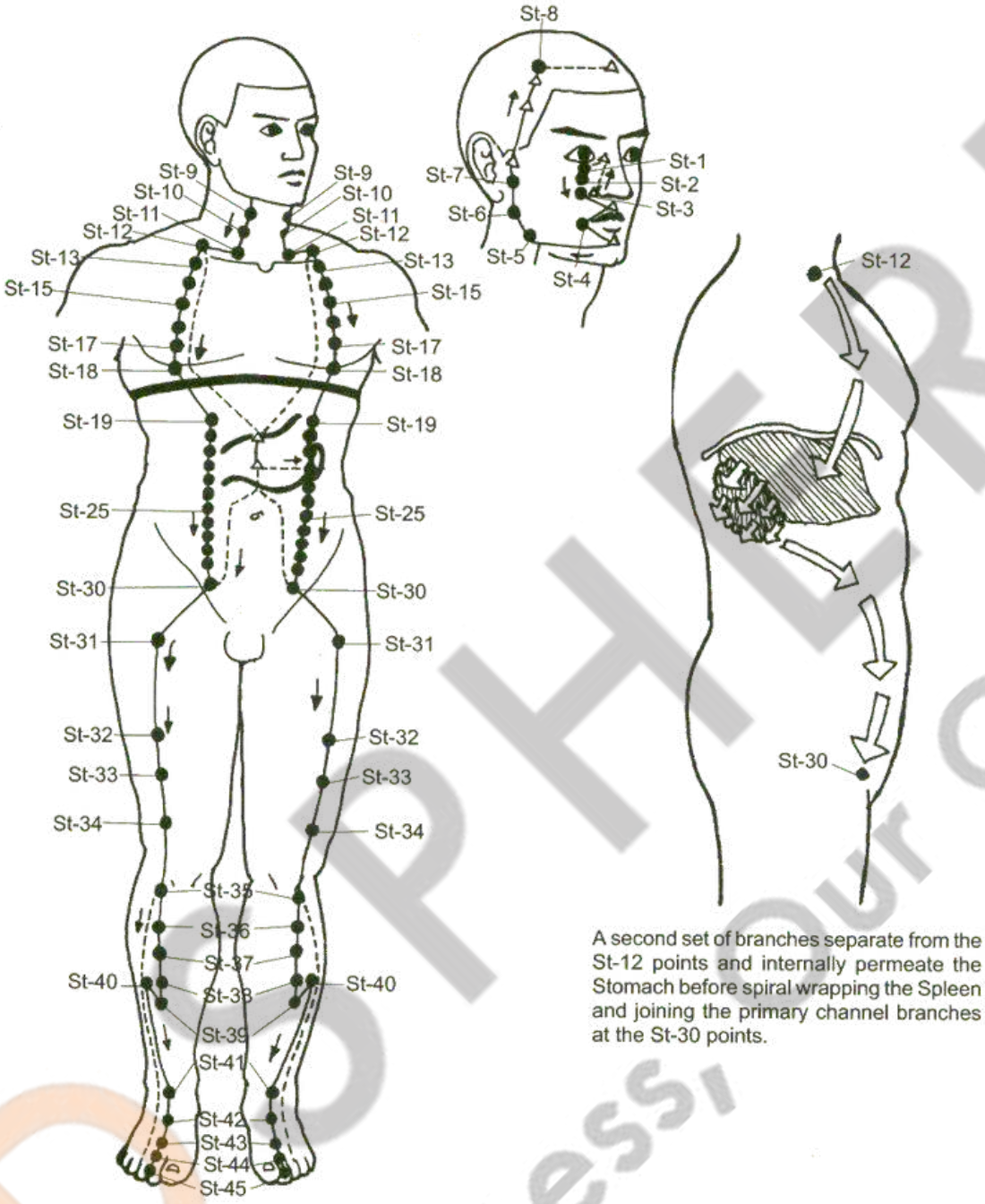
The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Spleen (Sp) Channels

Indications of Spleen disharmony include stomach problems, flatulence, vomiting, and bloating. Unreasonable worry may also arise.

The Stomach Meridian

Beginning at the side of the nose, the Stomach meridian rises to the corner of the eye (where it connects to the Urinary Bladder meridian) before descending along the side of the nose, to enter the upper gum, and follow the outer lips to the lower jaw, toward the joint of the jaw. It branches here with one branch ascending along the front of the ear to the forehead. The other branch descends through the body to the diaphragm, and runs to the stomach and spleen. A third branch emerges from the lower jaw and runs across the outside of the body, crossing the chest and belly, until it terminates in the groin.

The line that runs through the stomach reconnects with this third branch and runs downward along the front of the leg, reaching the top of the foot. Here it splits again, with the main branch ending in the outside (lateral) tip of the second toe. The other branch reaches the inner (medial) side of the big toe where it meets the Spleen meridian. Just below the knee an additional branch splits off and runs to the lateral side of the third toe.



A second set of branches separate from the St-12 points and internally permeate the Stomach before spiral wrapping the Spleen and joining the primary channel branches at the St-30 points.

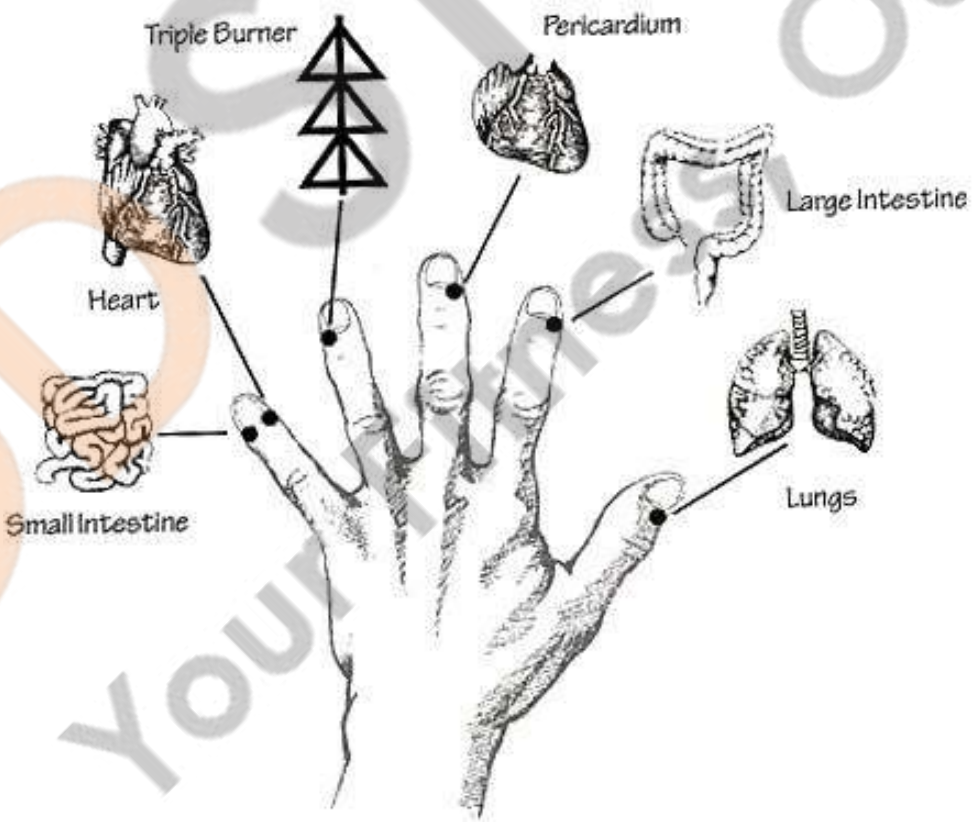
The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Stomach (St) Channels

Like the Spleen meridian, problems with the Stomach meridian may be indicated by abdominal problemssuch as bloating, vomiting, pain in any of the areas the meridian passes through (mouth, nose, teeth, etc.), as well as mental problems.

The Upper Body Meridians

There are six meridians that begin or end in the fingers of the hands. They all pass through the shoulder or armpit. Out of the six upper body meridians, three are considered yin: The Lungs, the Heart, and the Pericardium Meridians. These are paired with their yang homologue meridian: The Large Intestine, The Small Intestine, and the San Jiao (the triple heater), respectively.

Kindly refer to the "PDF - Meridian System" provided to you.

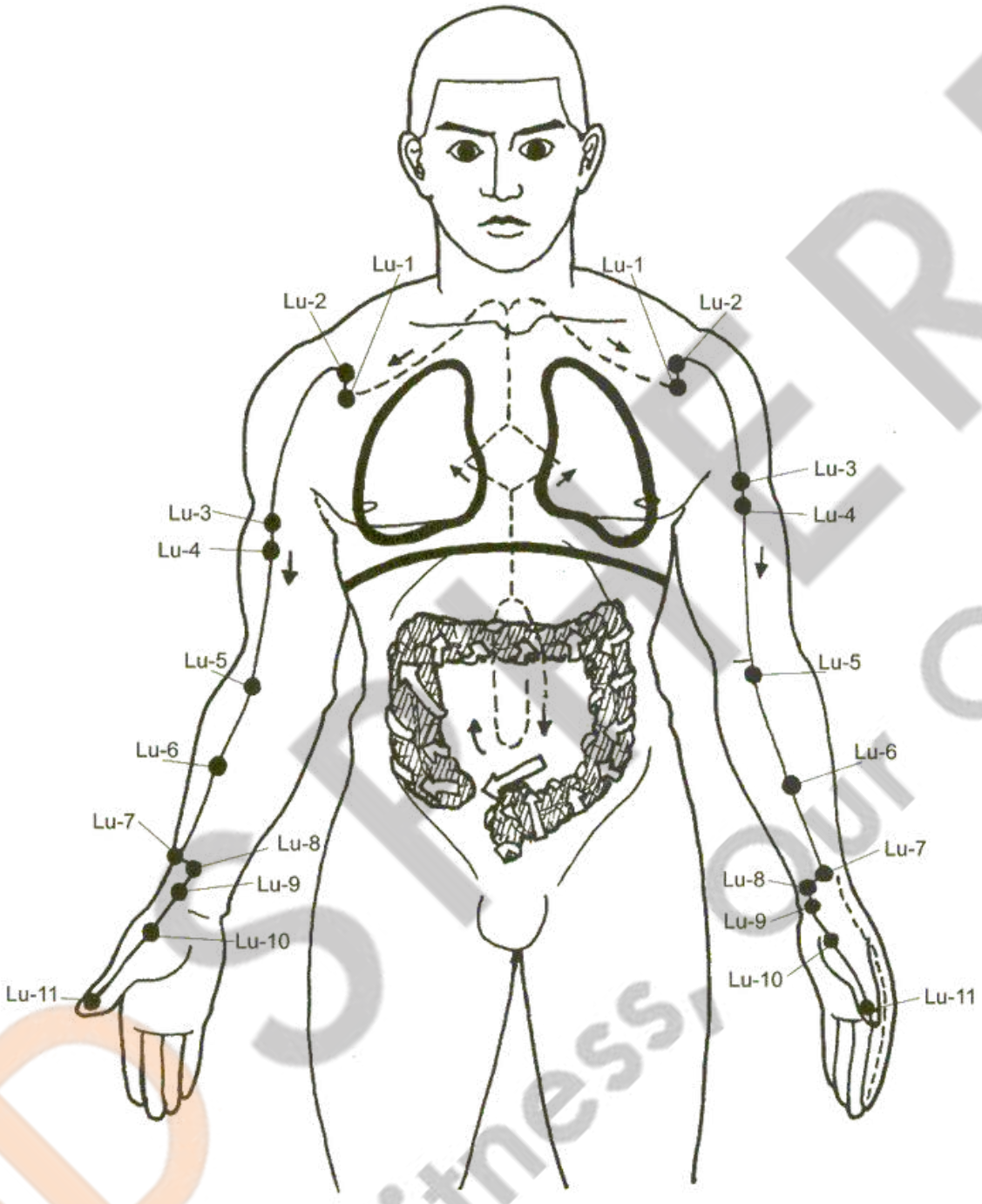


The Lungs (yin) and Large Intestine (yang)

The Lungs are the life-giving network of the whole body, and all our functions depend on them for sustenance. Although they are not physically connected to the intestines, they share energeticcharacteristics that link them into an ongoing cycle of drawing in nutrients and letting go of waste.

The Lung Meridian

The Lung Meridian begins inside the belly just above the navel, and drops down to the large intestines. From here it comes back up through the diaphragm and connects to the stomach. It ascends through the lungs and follows the throat before coming to the front surface of the shoulder from under the clavicle. From here it runs along the outer, thumb side (medial/radial) of the upper arm and the front (anterior) of the lower arm. It crosses the wrist and ends at the outer tip of the thumb. A small branch goes from the wrist to the tip of the index finger, where it connects to the Large Intestine meridian.



The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Lung (Lu) Channels

Respiratory problems like coughs, asthma, and chest pains may signify Lung meridian dysfunction. Extreme and persistent sadness and grief may also indicate problems here.

The Large Intestine Meridian

Beginning at the tip of the index finger, the Large Intestine Meridian runs between the thumb and forefinger and along the outside (lateral side) of the arm. It comes over the outside top of the shoulder and along the back of the shoulder blades to the spine. Here it branches, with one branch descending through the lungs, diaphragm, and the large intestines. The second branch ascends along the neck and the lower cheek, and enters the lower gum, circling the lower teeth. On the outside, this line also circles the upper lips, crosses under the nose and rises up to join the Stomach meridian.

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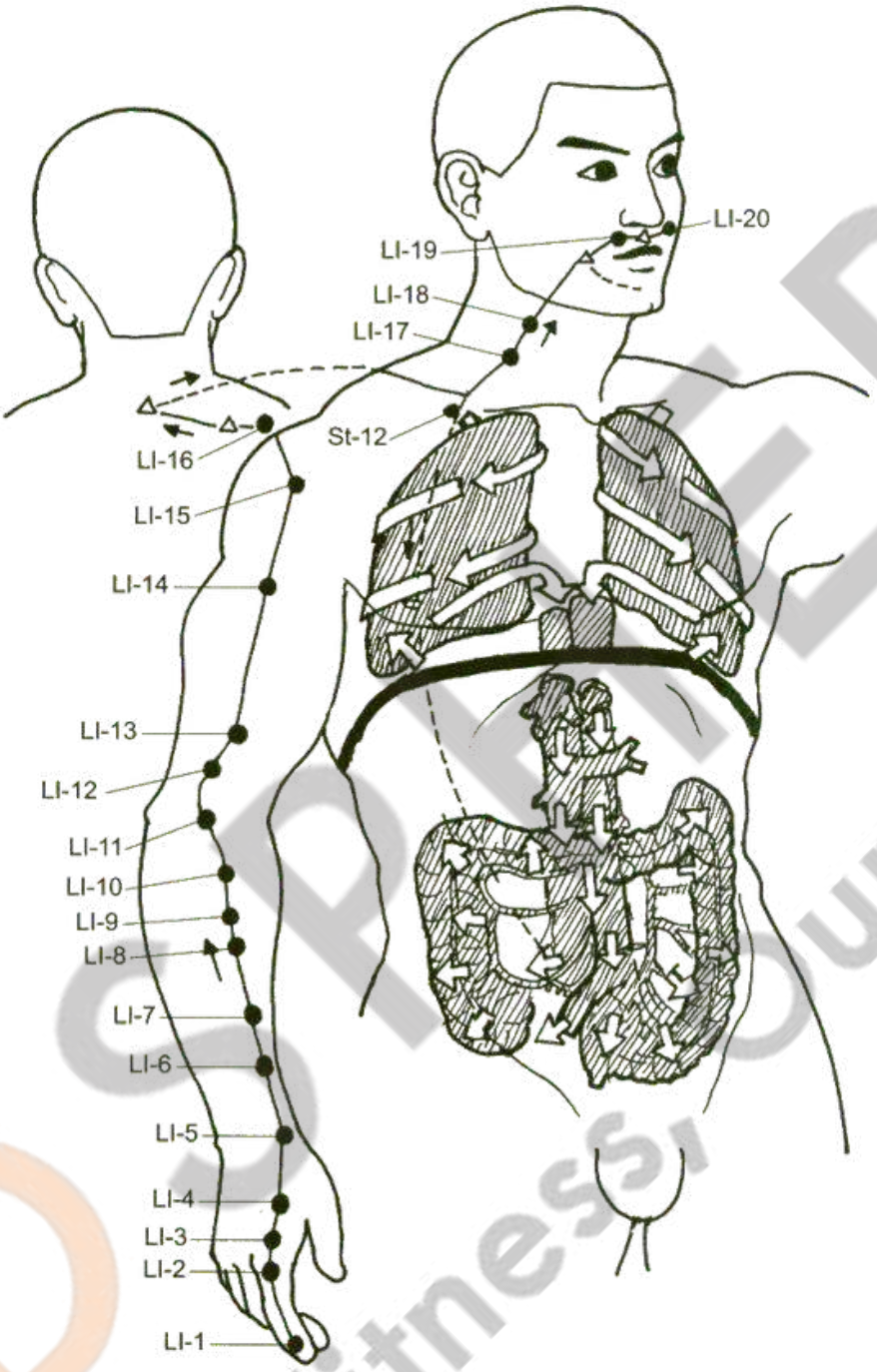


The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Large Intestine (LI) Channels

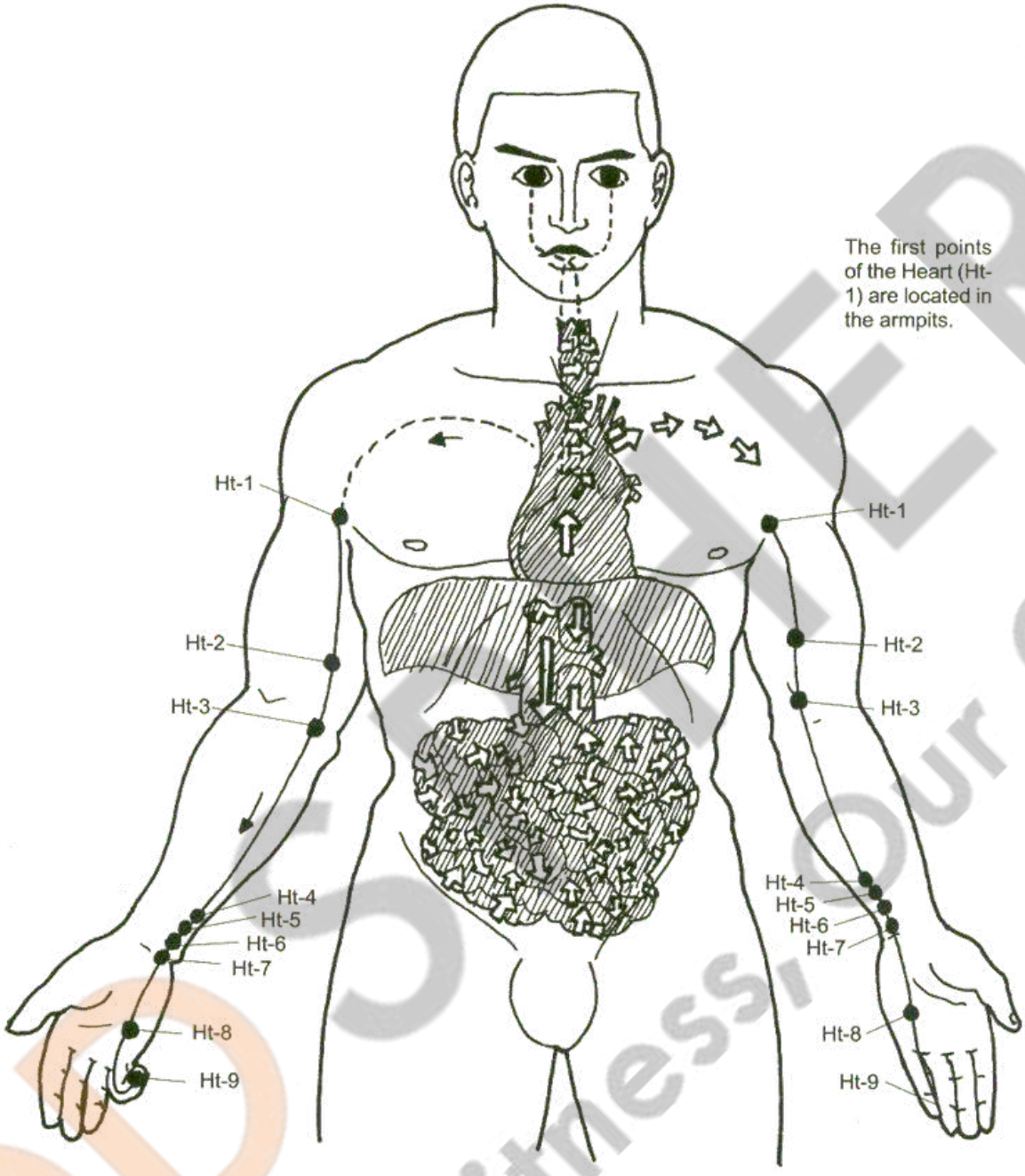
Problems in the mouth, teeth, nose, and throat such as toothaches and sore throats, as well as problems with the neck and shoulders, may indicate disharmony of the Large Intestine meridian.

The Heart (yin) and Small Intestine (yang)

Both organs are distant in the body and serve different physical functions, but energetically they resonate with the same characteristics.

The Heart Meridian

The three branches of the Heart Meridian begin in the heart. One branch flows downward through the diaphragm to meet the small intestines. Another rises up alongside the throat and ends in the lower eye. The third runs across the chest, through the lungs, and comes out through the armpit. It flows along the midline of the inside upper arm, through the inner elbow, along the midline of the inner lower arm, until it crosses the wrist and palm, beforeending in the inside tip of the little finger where it connects to the Small Intestine meridian.

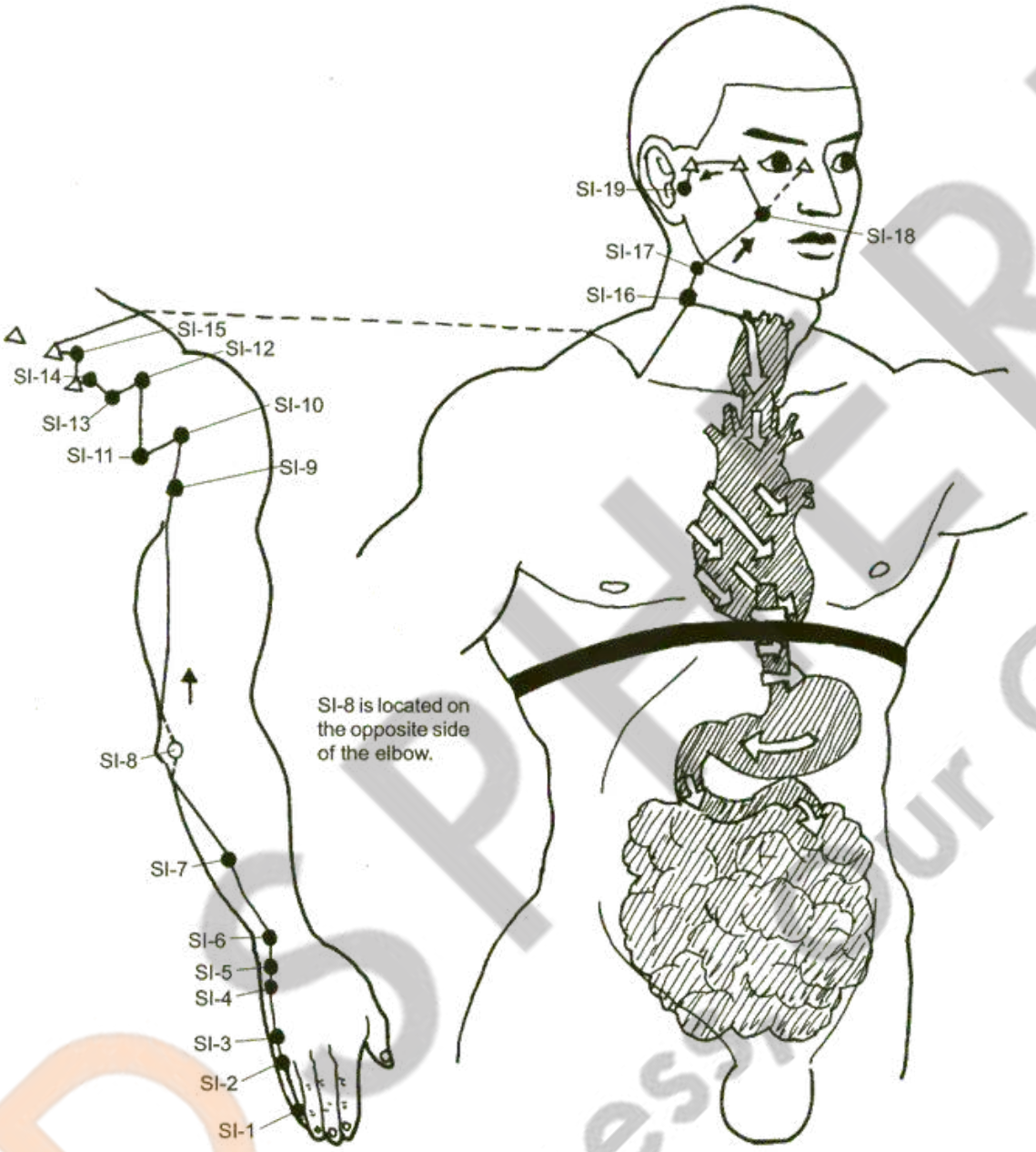


The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Heart (Ht) Channels

Disorders of the heart and chest such as palpitations, pain, insomnia, night sweats, and mental problems may signal problems with the Heart Meridian.

The Small Intestine

Starting where the Heart meridian ends, the Small Intestine Meridian begins at the outer tip of the little finger. It runs along the back edge of the hand, through the wrist, upward along the outer forearm and upper arm, to the shoulder. After circling the back of the shoulder, it meets the Governor Vessel meridian. Here it branches, with one branch going inside the body and descending through the heart, diaphragm, and stomach before ending in the small intestine. Another branch ascends along the side of the neck to the cheek and outer corner of the eye from where it then goes to the ear. Another small branch leaves the cheek to run to the inner eye where it meets the Urinary Bladder meridian.



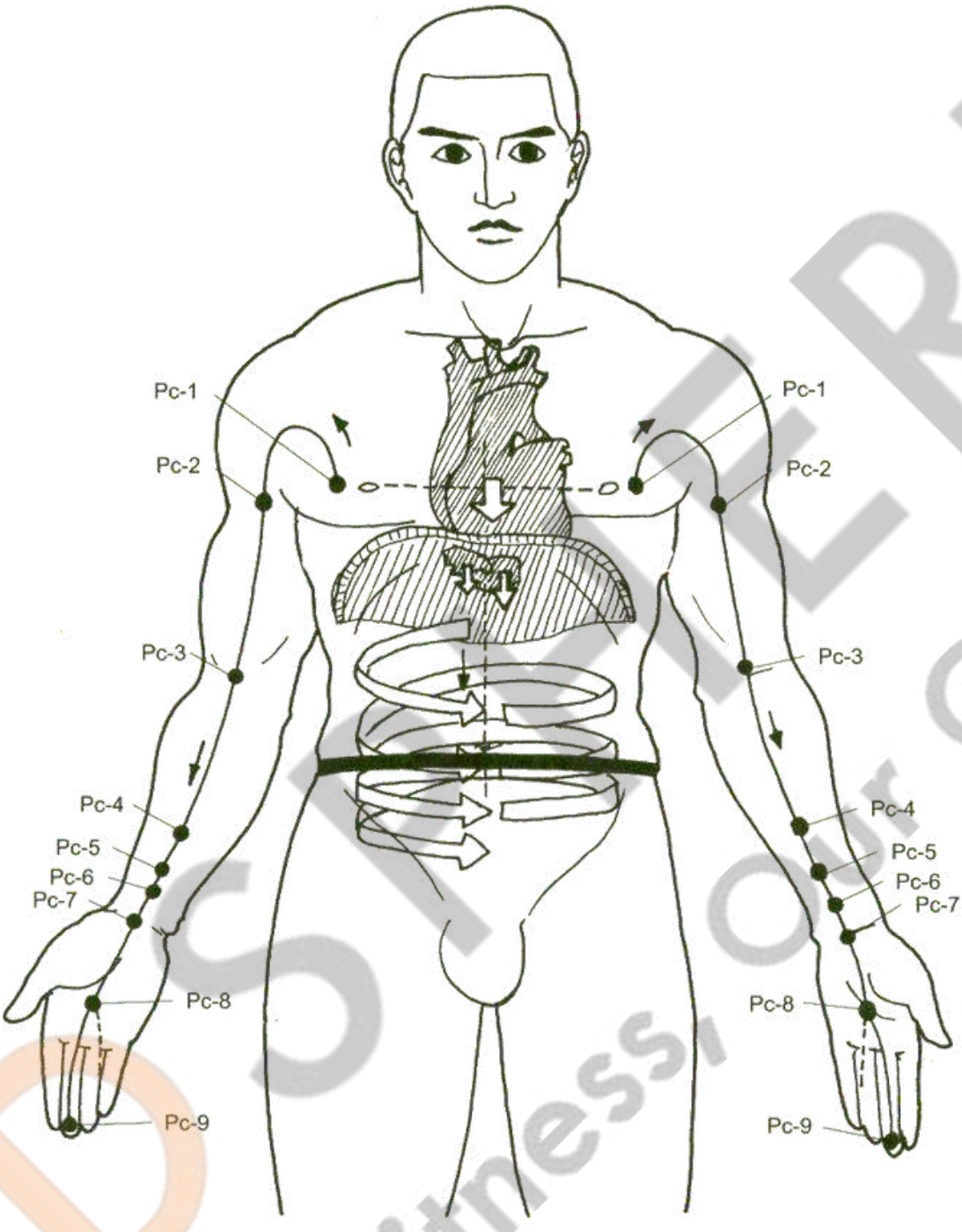
The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Small Intestine (SI) Channels

Disharmony in the Small Intestine meridian may be indicated by ear, eye, or stomach problems such as deafness, pain in the lower abdomen, or pain in the shoulders or neck.

The Pericardium (yin) and the Triple Heater (San Jiao) (yang)

The Pericardium Meridian

The pericardium covers the heart and is considered in Chinese medicine to be an organ function of its own. The Pericardium Meridian begins in the chest and connects to the pericardium. From here it moves down the chest, connecting the three sections of the San Jiao meridian. Another branch moves horizontally across the chest, coming to the surface of the ribs, moves up and around the armpit and down the front of the bicep and forearm to the palm, and ends at the tip of the middle finger. A small branch leads from the palm to the tip of the ring finger where it connects to the San Jiao meridian.

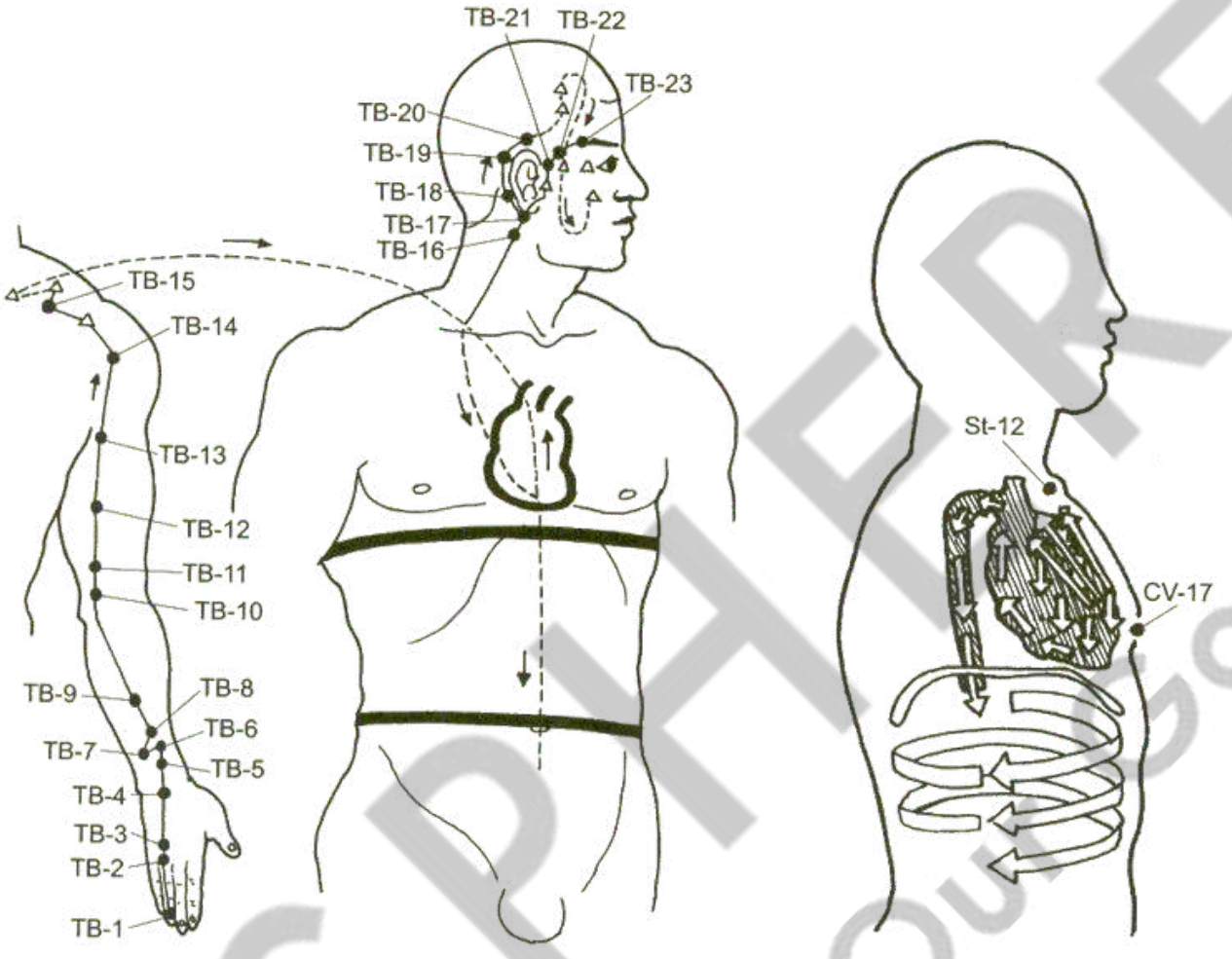


The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Pericardium (Pc) Channels

Pain in the heart area, poor circulation, some stomach problems, and mental problems may indicate disharmony of the Pericardium meridian.

The San Jiao Meridian

The San Jiao Meridian is often called the "Triple Burner" or "Triple Energizer." It begins in the ring finger where the Pericardium meridian ends. It runs over the back of the hand, the wrist, and lower arm. It passes the outer point of the elbow and the back (lateral) of the upper arm to the back (posterior) shoulder. From here it comes over the shoulder to the front of the body and enters the chest beneath the sternum. Here it branches, with the main branch running to the pericardium and continuing down through the diaphragm to the three burners: upper, middle and lower. The second branch ascends along the side of the neck, circles the back of the ear and then circles the side of the face. Another small branch emerges from the back of the ear and connects to the Gall Bladder meridian at the outer corner of the eye.



The internal flow of the Triple Burner Channels moves from St-12 down to CV-17, where it disperses into the chest and envelops the Pericardium. From the Pericardium, as the energy flows down through the diaphragm, it circulates through the chest and permeates the Triple Burners (a continuing branch flows upward to the St-12 points).

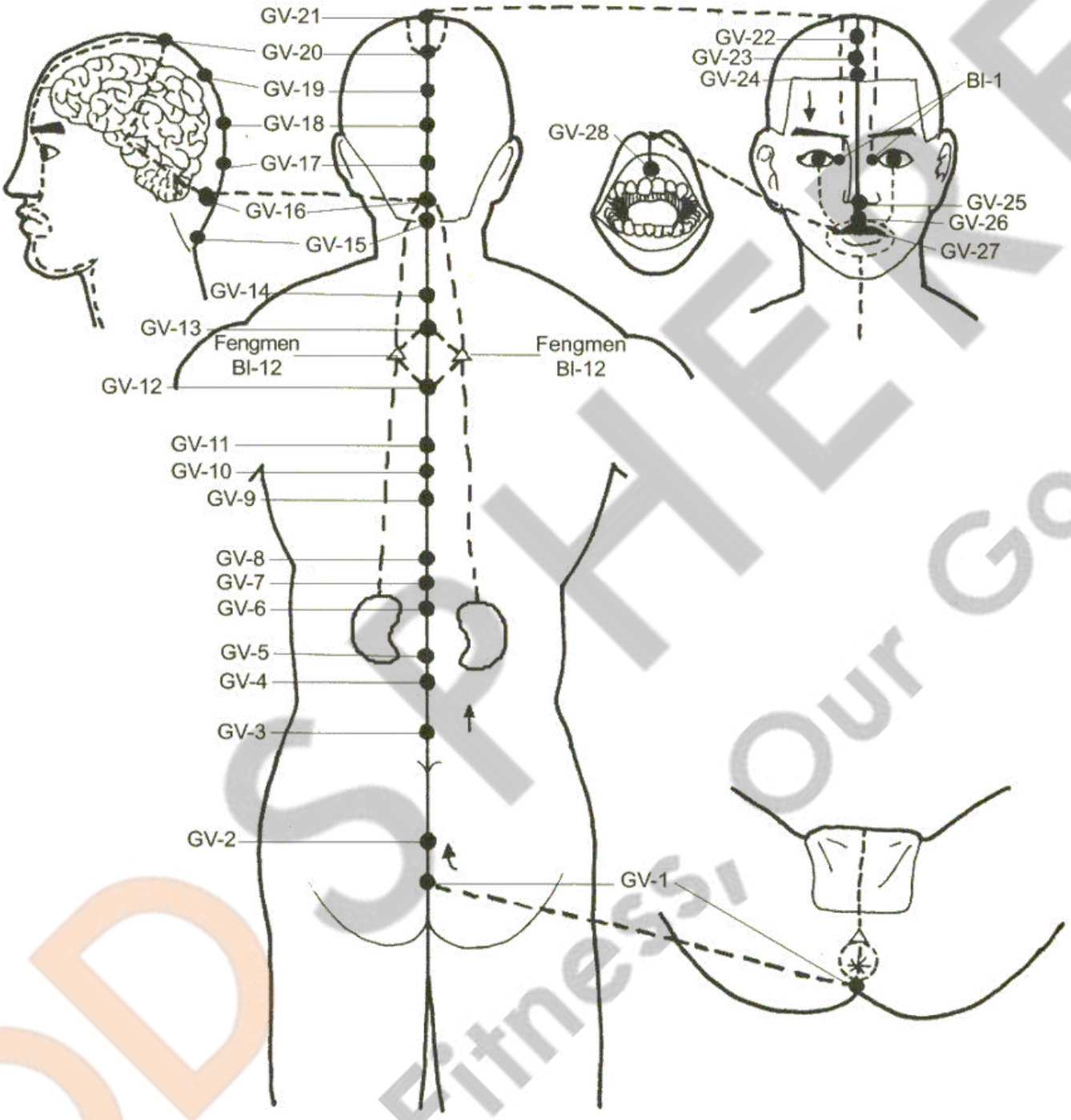
The Internal and External Qi Flow of the Triple Burners (TB) Channel

Problems associated with the San Jiao meridian may occur in the side of the face, neck, or throat, or in the abdomen. Examples could include deafness, ringing in the ears, bloating, and urinary difficulties.

The Extra Meridians

As mentioned before, the meridian system is made up of the lines connecting the five yin and six yang organs plus the pericardium. Beyond these twelve, there are eight additional meridians that a Chinese doctor must know. These remaining eight are beyond our scope; however, we will review the two most important: The Governor Vessel and the Conception Vessel meridians. These two are considered important because they have acupuncture points separate from those on any of the other twelve main meridians. All the other extra meridians share points with the main meridians.

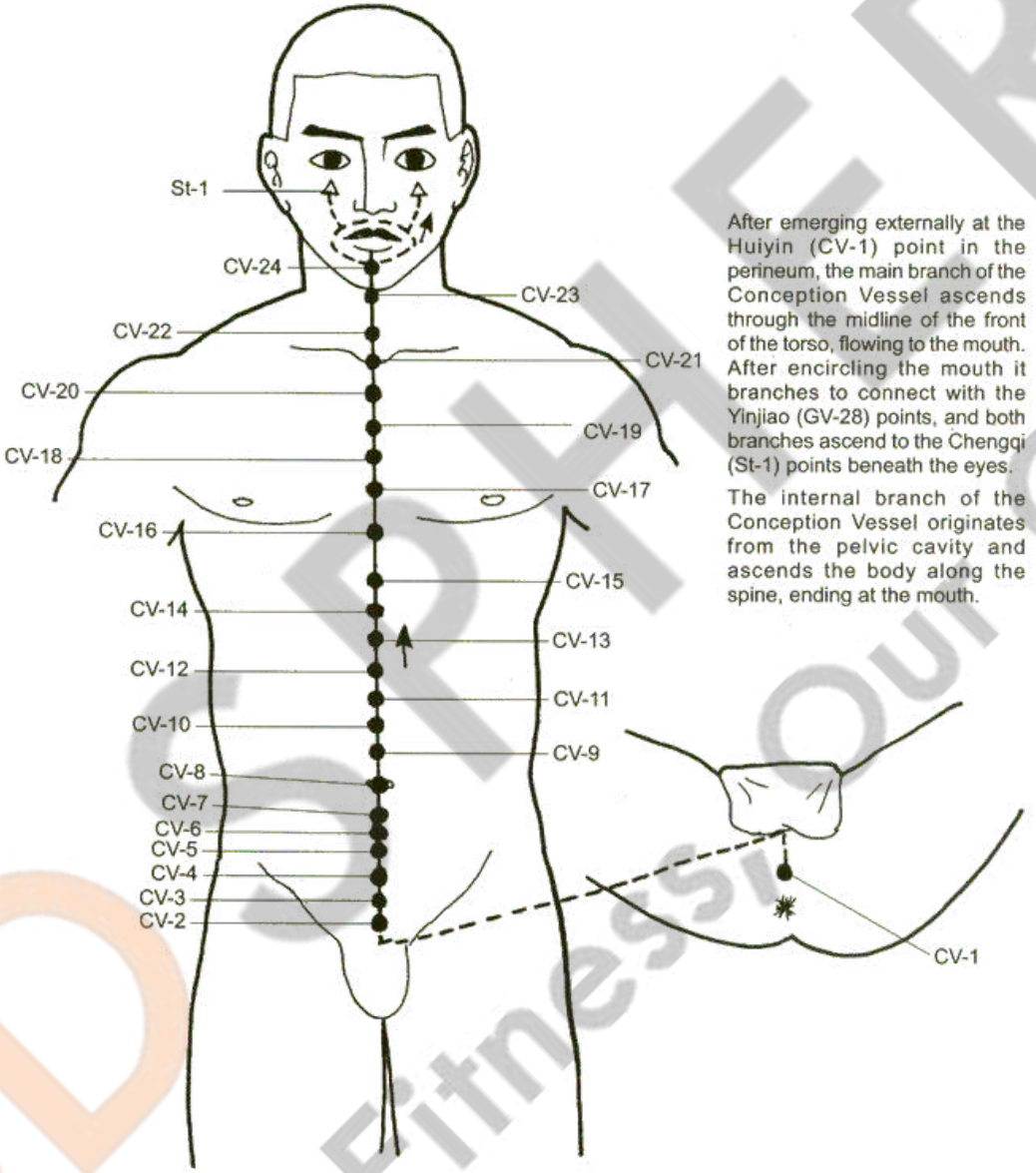
Dr. Motoyama associates the **Governor Vessel Meridian** with the sushumna nadi. It begins within the lower belly and splits in three. Two smaller branches ascend to connect to each kidney. The third and main branch descends to the perineum where it enters the tip of the spinal cord and then rises up the spine to the brain. This branch comes over the top of the skull, down the middle of the forehead and nose, and terminates in the upper gum. Dr. Motoyama recommends the practice of nadi shodanato purify this meridian.



The Governing Vessel (GV)

The Conception Vessel Meridian also begins in the lower abdomen next to the Governor Vessel. It has only one branch and it too descends to the perineum. Emerging from the muladhara (halfway between the anus and the "vegetables"), it ascends along the front midline of the body through the neck and chin to the mouth. At the mouth it splits and goes around the lips before sending branches to the lower eyes.

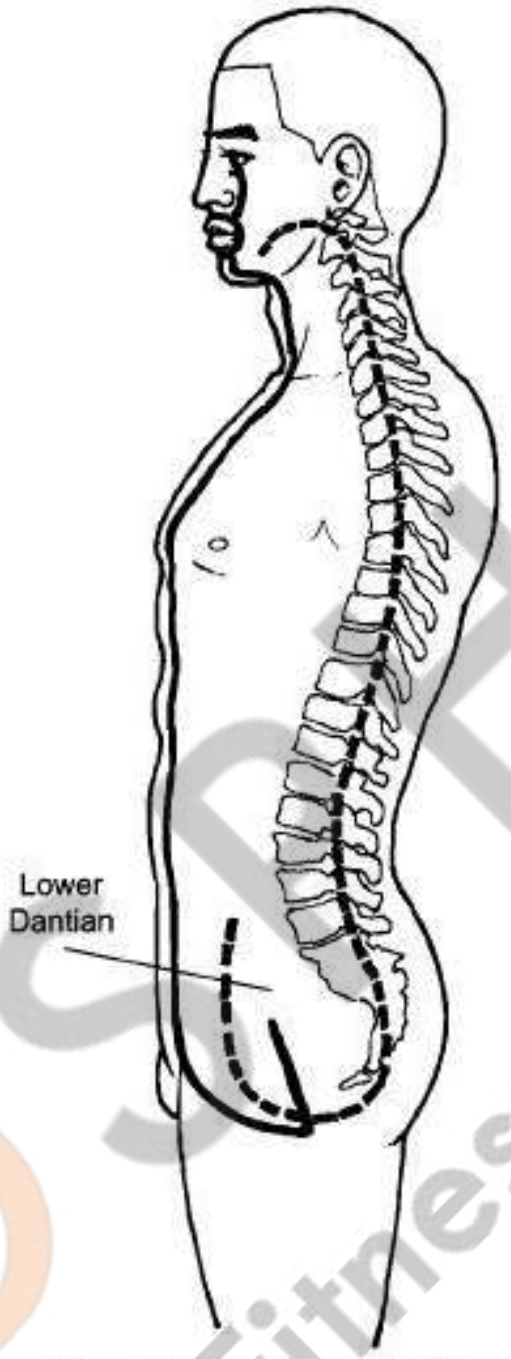
The Governor Vessel and Conception Vessel run along the front and back of the torso. These lines alsocontain the front and back of each chakra. When we breathe and draw energy up the Governor Vessel and down the Conception Vessel, we are completing the Microcosmic Orbit. (Clark, 2007)



After emerging externally at the Huiyin (CV-1) point in the perineum, the main branch of the Conception Vessel ascends through the midline of the front of the torso, flowing to the mouth. After encircling the mouth it branches to connect with the Yinjiao (GV-28) points, and both branches ascend to the Chengqi (St-1) points beneath the eyes.

The internal branch of the Conception Vessel originates from the pelvic cavity and ascends the body along the spine, ending at the mouth.

The Conception Vessel (CV)



The Conception Vessel (Side View)

Chi and Rebound

Yoga is trying to help us to control our Chi:

- Control our behaviours (Yamas and Niyamas)
- Control our body to stay still (Asanas)
- Control our breath and feel the energy when we breathe (Pranayama)

With the practice of asanas and pranayama we can feel the influence of the movement of Chi, and this is what we know as rebound.

After practicing a pose for several minutes, it is a good idea to relax in stillness and feel the rebound. Poses temporarily block chi and blood from flowing in some areas and redirect it toward other areas. When we relax in stillness, we can calmly focus on the sensations of Chi. After a minute or so the sensations morphand change into a general feeling of peaceful calmness that is not centred in any particular area.

Learning to feel chi in the physical body is a first step to objectively experiencing the emotions of the astral body and the thoughts of the casual body.

This rebound, or sensation of the movement can be experienced physically or emotionally, or both.

- **Physically:** Heat, pressure, coolness, tingling, water-like internal movements, rush of blood, etc.
- **Emotionally:** Immediate sense of wellbeing, contentment, satisfaction, relaxion, etc.

The Chakras

Chakras are models of the way the subtle energy in our bodies can be networked into gathering points, in the same way nervous energy may be net-worked in our solar plexus. Chakras are not to be considered physical organs of the body.

Chakra is a centre of subtle energy that needs to be manipulated in order to achieve complete physical and spiritual health, and eventually enlightenment. In ordinary individuals, the chakras are undeveloped or even dormant. The practice of yoga helps to awaken the chakras, allowing prana to flow through them.

Nadis are not to be found in the physical body. Every part/centre/channels of the physical body have its counterpart in the subtle body (astral body), and both bodies are interdependent on the material plane. The seven psychic centres, or chakras (+ 1 Yapini Chakra), and the nadis are in the subtle body. They influence the endocrine system. In the vertebral column, these subtle centres are visualized in the form of mandalas with lotus flowers with a certain number of petals etc. This is meant for concentration and meditation purposes. However, these are modern ways to concentrate better.

Philosophical Significance of Chakras

According to the philosophy of Yoga, the entire universe is a manifestation of pure consciousness. In manifesting the universe, this pure consciousness seems to become divided into two aspects, neither of which can exist without the other. One aspect is Consciousness, Shiva, like the masculine. Shiva has the power to be but not the power to become or change. The other aspect Shakti, like the feminine; is dynamic, energetic and creative. Shakti is the Mother of the Universe, for it is from her that all forms are born. This **Shiva - Shakti is Yang - Yin.**

Yoga explains that the human being is a miniature universe. All that is found in the cosmos can be found within each individual and the same principle that applies to the universe applies in the case of the individual being. In human beings, Unmanifest Shakti, the feminine aspect is called Kundalini Shakti. This potential energy is said to rest at the base of the spine. The objective of Yoga is to awaken this cosmic energy and make it ascend through the psychic centres, the chakras, which lie along the axis of the spine as consciousness, representing milestones in emotional and spiritual evolution.

Shakti will then unite at the crown of the head with Shiva, the pure consciousness. This union is the aim of Yoga: a resolution of duality into unity again, a fusion with the Absolute. By this union the adept attains liberation while living, which is considered in yogic terms to be the highest experience: a union of the individual with the total.

Kundalini awakening experiences are understood in terms of the yogic chakra system, the psycho-spiritual energy centres along the spine. According to Yogic tradition, this rises from the root chakra up through the spinal channel called sushumna and is believed to activate each chakra it passes through. Each chakra is said to contain special characteristics.

ABSOLUTE BLISS

BLISS

ANGER, ALERTNESS, WISDOM

GRIEF, GRATEFULNESS

LOVE, HATRED, FEAR

GREED, JEALOUSY, GENEROSITY AND JOY

PROCREATIVITY, CREATIVITY

ENTHUSIASM, INERTIA

The Nadis: Psychic Channels

According to Yogic theory, the most important Nadis are - Ida, Pingala (both on either side of the body) and Sushumna (going through the centre). Prana, the vital energy, flows through them. When Sushumna starts functioning fully then the person becomes completely balanced and peaceful. Then it starts opening all the chakras to their full potential leading to the manifestation of divine attributes like fearlessness, non-judgmental attitude, compassion, forgiveness, unconditional love and so on. And it may generate additional psychic powers as well.

MULADHARA
Sanskrit: मूलाधार
ROOT CHAKRA

The first chakra located at the lower end of the spine; this is visualized as a deep red lotus possessing four petals. This is the place of the kundalini Shakti. This chakra is the symbol of the earth element.

SVADHISHTHANA

Sanskrit: स्वाधष्ठिान

SACRAL CHAKRA

The second chakra is located in the region of the sacrum, behind the genitals. This is visualized as an orange lotus with six petals. Its is the symbol of the element of water.

MANIPURA

Sanskrit: मणपिूर

SOLAR PLEXUS CHAKRA

The third chakra is situated in the navel region, corresponding to the solar plexus. This ten-petalled lotus is bright yellow in colour, triangular shaped and represents the fire element.

ANAHATA
Sanskrit: अनाहत
HEART CHAKRA

The fourth chakra, is situated in the heart region. This is a green coloured lotus possessing twelve petals and it represents the element of air.

VISHUDDHA
Sanskrit: विशुद्ध
THROAT CHAKRA

This chakra is located in the throat region. This lotus of blue colour possesses sixteen petals and represents the space element. This corresponds to all forms of communication.

AJNA

Sanskrit: आज्ञा

THIRD-EYE CHAKRA

This is located between the two eyebrows also called the third eye. This Indigo lotus has two petals. This corresponds to balance and right knowledge.

SAHASRARA

Sanskrit: सहस्रार

CROWN CHAKRA

The Crown Chakra's thousand petalled lotus is located at the crown of the head is represented by violet colour. It symbolises Bliss. 12 Inches above it is the Yapini Chakra which symbolises Absolute Bliss.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO YIN YOGA

Anatomy of Yin Yoga

When we talk about tissues in the body, we can use the context of position or density, the yang tissues can be seen as our muscles, blood, and skin compared to the yin tissues of ligaments, bones, and joints. The contexts of flexibility or heat could also be used: muscles are elastic, but bones are plastic. Muscles get warm, while ligaments generally remain cool. Yin tissues, being dryer and much less elastic, could be damaged if they were stressed employing rhythmic, repetitive movements. Instead, our more plastic tissues appreciate and require gentler pressures, applied for longer periods of time, in order to be stimulated to grow stronger. Yin Yoga is specifically designed to exercise the ligaments and to regain space and strength in the joints.

Stability and Mobility

Within yang there is yin and vice versa; this also applies to our tissues. For example, 30% of a muscle (yang) is actually fascia (yin). It is the fascia within our muscles that govern the muscles' range of movement while it is our muscle cells that govern their strength. Therefore, it is the yin part of our practice, the holding of the pose that provides length.

Physiologically, through our yoga practice, we build stability and mobility. When we are young, we are in a more yang-like state: we have the ultimate mobility that we will ever have, but we have no stability; as we age, we become more and more yin-like-more rigid. For this reason, as we get older, as we get stiffer, we need a yin form of exercise to keep us mobile.

Stretch versus Stress

These terms are not synonyms. Stress is the tension that we place upon our tissues, while stretch is the elongation that results from the stress. A stretch however, does not always accompany a stress, so they are not the same thing.

We can stress ligaments too, especially in Yin yoga, but because the ligaments are more plastic and less elastic than muscles, that stress is less likely to result in a stretch. With Yin yoga, we are not trying to stretch our ligaments or joint capsules; we are trying to stress them. Over time, the tissues may become longer, thicker, and stronger, but in any Yin yoga session, we are not trying to lengthen these particular tissues. **In Yin yoga, the key is the stress not the stretch.**

There are three things that we do physically to the tissues of our body when we stress them in yoga asana practice:

- Stretch
- Compress
- Twist

The results of these three stresses are called tension, compression and shear.

Stretch

Compress

Twist

Our Tissues

Tissues are simply aggregations of cells in our body that have a similar purpose and arrangement. Generally, there are four main kinds of tissues:

- Epithelia (skin, linings of our organs, etc.)
- Nervous
- Muscle
- Connective Yoga most obviously affects these last two, although it actually affects the whole body and all or our tissues.

Yin Yoga affects and benefits more specifically our connective tissues (CT) linked directly with our flexibility.

Flexibility

The resistance to stretching or moving – the limitation on our flexibility – is due to tension along the tissues, which resist further elongation, or compression, where two parts of the body come into contact and prevent further movement.
If tension is stopping the movement, it is felt in the direction away from the movement. If compression is stopping the movement, it is felt in the direction of the movement.

When resistance (tension) limits the range of motion (ROM) we have in our joints, the resistance has been found to come from four main tissues: the skin, the tendon of the muscle, the muscle itself and its fascia, and the joint capsule and its ligaments. These all provide tensile resistance to movement. However, the biggest limit to flexibility, when it is caused by tension, is the joints' rigidity, followed by the muscle and its fascia. Yang yoga is excellent for opening us to the limits of flexibility of our muscle tissue, its fascia, and our skin. Yin Yoga is required to safely open the joints and our ligaments to their healthy limits.

Fascia

The term fascia is a Latin word that means "band" or "bandage". Fascia and all of its components, creates an integrating mesh that envelops our bones, muscles, and organs. It is very important for our overall health, ability to move, and proper functioning of our internal communications systems. There is never a sharp dividing line between one tissue and the next; rather, the fascia of a muscle becomes denser and eventually becomes the tendon. In the same manner, the tendon, which joins to a bone, eventually becomes the bone. What provides the stiffness we experience in our tight muscles is the resistance of the fascia to elongation.

This ability to resist stretching comes from the collagen fibers. Fascia has varying amounts of both collagen and elastin, which affects how flexible the fascia is. It is important to note that fascia is a yin-like tissue and will respond best to yin-like stresses. A long-held static stress will help reorganize the fascia and allow it tobecome longer and thicker more than a short, yang-type of stress will.

There are different types of fascia:

- Fibers, as in the muscles
- Located just beneath the surface of the skin, called superficial fascia or hypodermis
- Another type directly beneath this, called deep fascia, which is usually tougher and tighter than the superficial fascia. Embedded inside this deep fascia are the tissues of the muscles, the blood vessels, and all the other tubes that wind through the body.
- Another kind of fascia lines the body's cavities.

For our purposes, We are mostly interested in the deep fascia and how it contributes to the restrictions of our range of motion. The different systems and structures in our body (muscles, bones, blood system, nervous system, etc.) are distinct, but not separate. Everything is interconnected and all the tissues work together. The deep fascia merges with all the other tissues embedded within it. What we do to one tissue, we do to all.

The Deep Fascia

- Binds the muscle together, while ensuring proper alignment of the muscle fibers, blood vessels flowing through the muscles, nerves, and other components of the muscle
- Transmits the forces applied to the muscle evenly to all parts of the muscle
- Lubricates the various surfaces that need to move or slide along each other.

This continuity means a small movement in one area of the body pulls on the whole web of fascia connected throughout the body.

Theory of Tension and Compression

In yoga asana practice, physically you will feel two things: tension and, sooner or later, compression; you can also experience both at the same time.

Tension refers to what's been pull apart, to the resistance of our tissues to being stretched, which restricts further movement. Tension can be found in our muscles, tendons, skin, ligaments, joint capsules, and the fascia that envelops and invests all of our tissues.

A progression from minimal to significant tension shows that tension can arise minimally in the skin, then more significantly within the superficial fascia and deeper fascia, and in the muscles and tendons. After these tensile restrictions have been worked through, tension in the ligaments and the joint capsule becomes the governing cause of restriction to motion.

Therefore, tightness in the muscles is not the major factor in limiting our range of motion; the joint capsule has a greater effect on our mobility than the muscles.

Tension is felt in the side opposite from the movement. For example, in a seated forward fold, the tensile resistance to going forward is felt in the back of the body (mainly in the hamstrings).

Tension can be changed, over time, with diligent practice. If what stops us in movement is not tension, then we have reached compression, and our journey will require different strategies: either going around that point of compression, or accepting that we have reached our limit.

Compression is what's been pushed together. It occurs when one part of the body comes into contact with another part and further movement in that direction is therefore not possible.

There are several kinds and causes of compression:

- Soft compression: It occurs when flesh come into contact with other flesh. For example, when the flesh of our chest hits the flesh of our legs.

- Medium compression: Arises when our bones compress our flesh. For example, when the bones of your pelvis compress into the flesh of your thigh in a lunge position.

- Hard compression: this is the unyielding compression of a bone hitting another bone.

Each Yin Pose in an opportunity to crawl into ourselves and stay there for a while

Tension and Compression Applied to Yoga

When we practice Yoga asana the fundamental distinction to make is: "Are the physical restrictions I am feeling tension or compression?" Tension is due to the stretching of muscle or connective tissue but compression is determined by the shape of our bones.

Almost everything we do in a yoga class is a tensile metaphor, something being stretched, relaxed, expanded, we "let go", we "make space". But depending on the join and the person, the sensation is not tension; it's two bones coming together and we can relax and let go and breathe all we want but compression is not going to change.

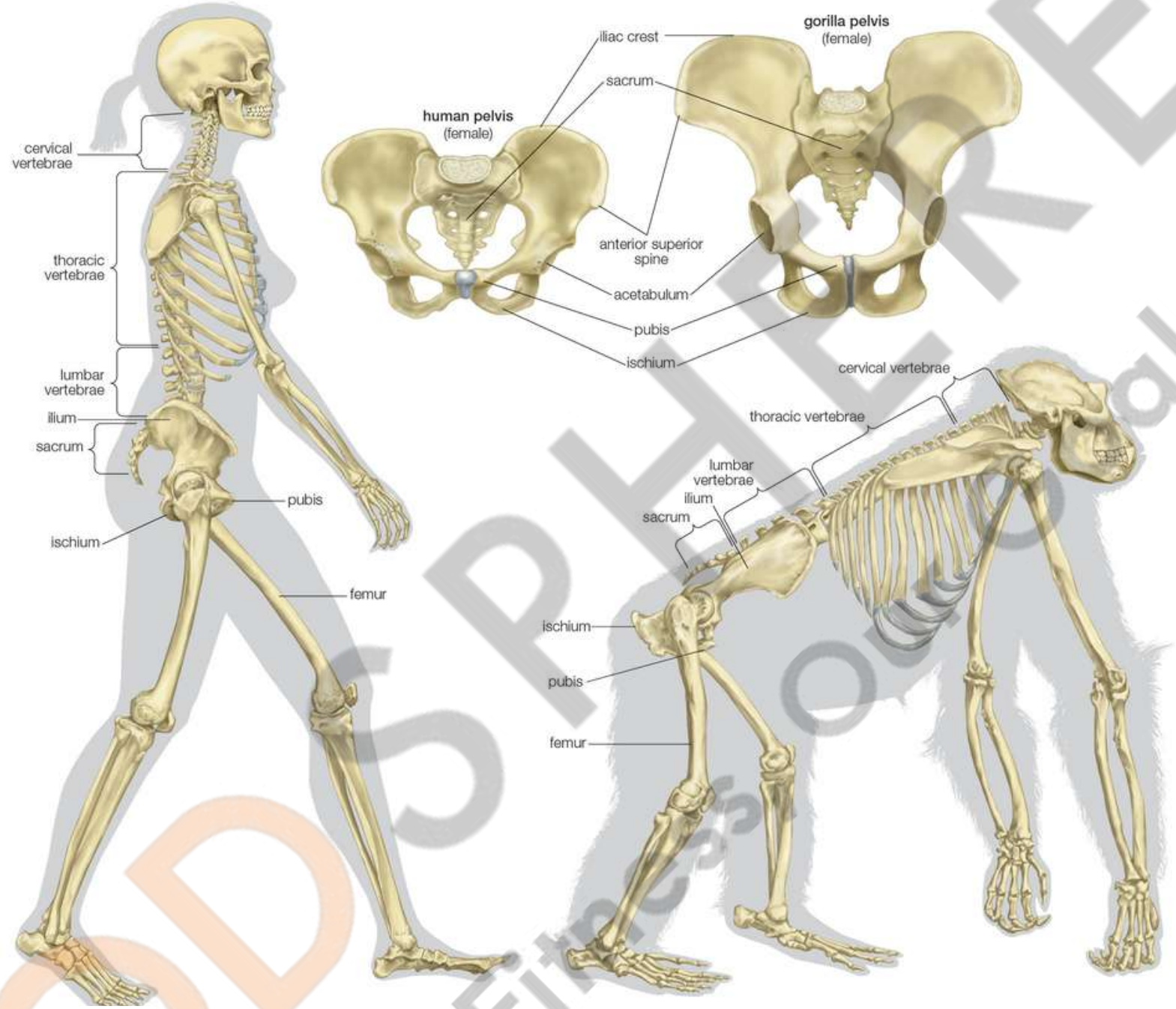
Either or both can restrict you from doing a pose. But the ultimate limit is not tension, it's compression. It may be that after stretching, bones won't allow any more movement. That's why it is so important to discriminate if you are feeling tension or compression.

If you don't recognize this, you could get frustrated and keep pushing harder. This effort eventually may result in an injury. The effort you do to stretch doesn't apply when things are compressing.

For the vast majority of us who have practiced yoga for several years the restrictions we experience are compressive, not tensile. It is the inherent shape of our bones that determines what we can or cannot practice safely. And because each person's bones are differently formed then what is beneficial for one person, it can be harmful for another.

Comparative and Functional Anatomy

Comparative anatomy is the comparative study of the body structures of different species of animals in order to understand the adaptive changes they have undergone in the course of evolution from common ancestors. The field is largely confined to the study of the vertebrate animals. This approach is used to study the structures of the human body as a specie but it doesn't study the immense amount of differences and varieties of skeletons among humans.


cervical vertebrae
thoracic vertebrae
lumbar vertebrae
ilium
sacrum
pubis
ischium
femur
human pelvis
(female)
iliac crest
sacrum
anterior superior spine
acetabulum
pubis
ischium
gorilla pelvis
(female)
cervical vertebrae
thoracic vertebrae
lumbar vertebrae
ilium
sacrum
ischium
pubis
femur

On the other hand, **functional anatomy** refers to the study of a body structure as it relates to its function. Functional anatomy research involves understanding the meaning of shape variation in biology. The reason for the variation might be function, inheritance, environment, disease or just something that changes shape over time (like during growth or locomotion).

This way of studying and understanding the human body, it's the foundation of the functional approach to yoga. All skeletons, all bones are shaped in different ways in every person, and we have to skilfully adapt each pose for each body. There is no one correct posture, one right way to practice; the asanas will express themselves according to the body that is forming them!

Skeletal Variations

The body can be divided into fourteen skeletal segments being moved by ten muscle groups, resulting in twenty-four target areas that all yoga poses aim to stress.

Each skeletal type will have different points of compression, which determines our range of motion. Ultimately, the way you can or cannot move your body is determined by the shape of your bones.

These skeletal variations show everywhere in every pose. For this reason, in a functional approach to yoga, we don't worry about where the body "should be" (aesthetic approach), but we pay attention to the purpose of the posture (functional approach).

The more you focus on where your fingers, hands, toes and feet should be, the more you compromise the more important joints closer to the spine (target areas).

Differences in Bones and Skeletons

Besides the obvious size and length variations, some bones are twisted 40 degrees backward or rotated 30 degrees upward. These differences might remain a mere curiosity but when these skeletal differences are coupled with the idea of compression it usually turns a student's yoga world around. Because all of our bones are different, all of our joints compress at different angles of flexion and extension. Through our yoga practice we can discover where we compressbut our yoga practice will not change where we compress.

Aesthetic and Functional Alignment

There are two main reasons to do a yoga practice: to become healthier or to master postures. If your goal is the former, you will be more successful if you adopt a functional approach to your practice, which means you focus on the intention of the postures rather than their appearance. If your intention is to look good, an aesthetic approach may be required. In order to follow a functional approach, however, there are three keys to adopt in your yoga practice ethic:

- Know the target area you are trying to affect.
- Determine what you are feeling in the target area while you are in the posture.
- If you are not feeling the pose in the target area, change what you are doing and find a position that creates the intended sensations.

A target area could be any region of the body where we want to focus our attention: the hips, the spine, the legs, the shoulders, etc. The concept can be broadened to include non-physical intentions as well, such as moving energy, paying attention closely to sensations, or refining your meditation. By thinking of your practice this way, you will naturally evolve a functional approach to yoga over a purely aesthetic or performance-related view.

By adopting a functional approach to your yoga practice, you are more likely to achieve your intention of optimizing health while minimizing the risk of injuries. The functional approach to yoga also leads directly to another realization: your body needs your yoga. (Clark, 2016)

Skeletal Segments to Define Compression Areas

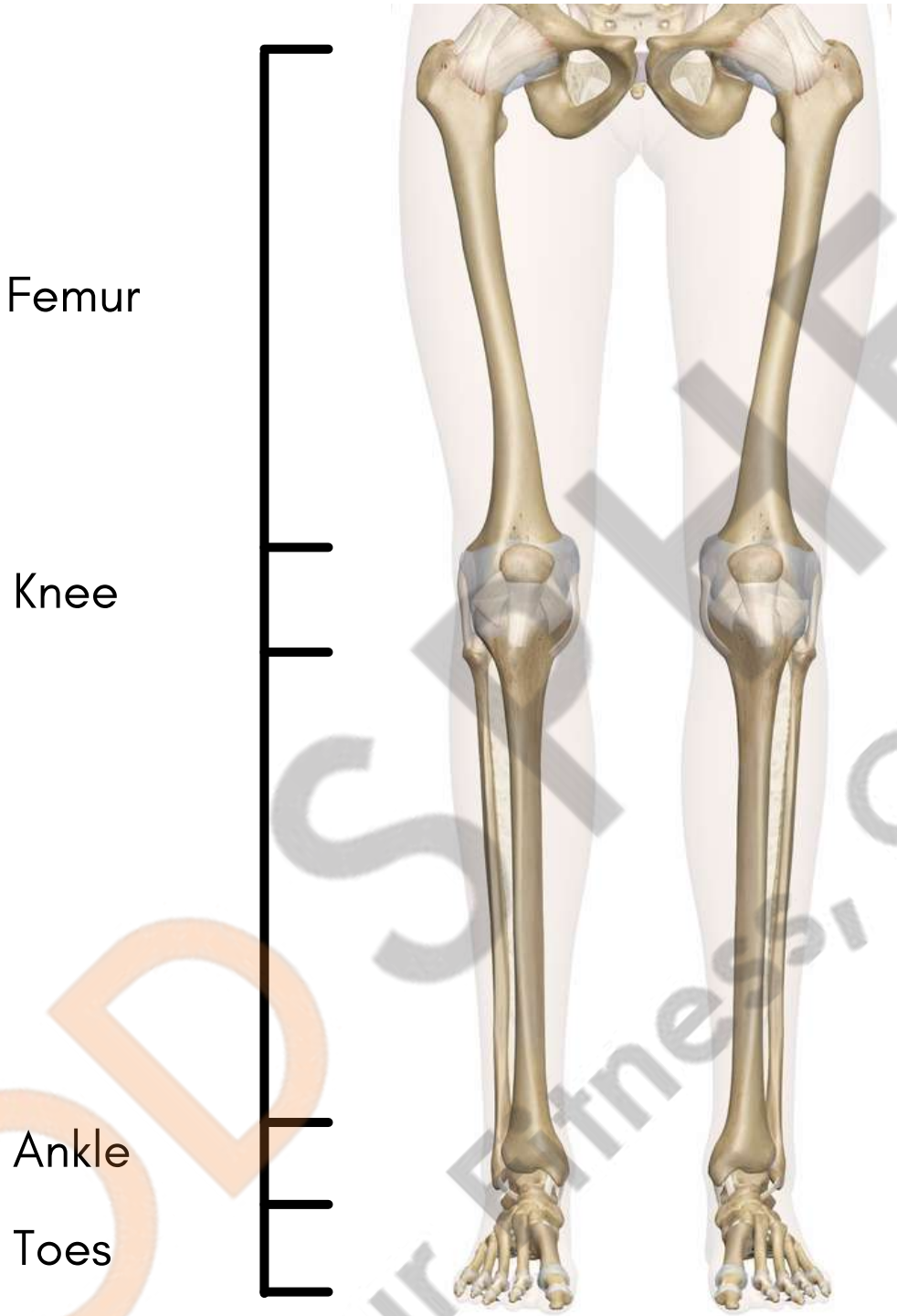
The rigid aesthetic approach ignores human variation, especially skeletal variation. All the bones of the body can be functionally grouped into 14 skeletal segments.

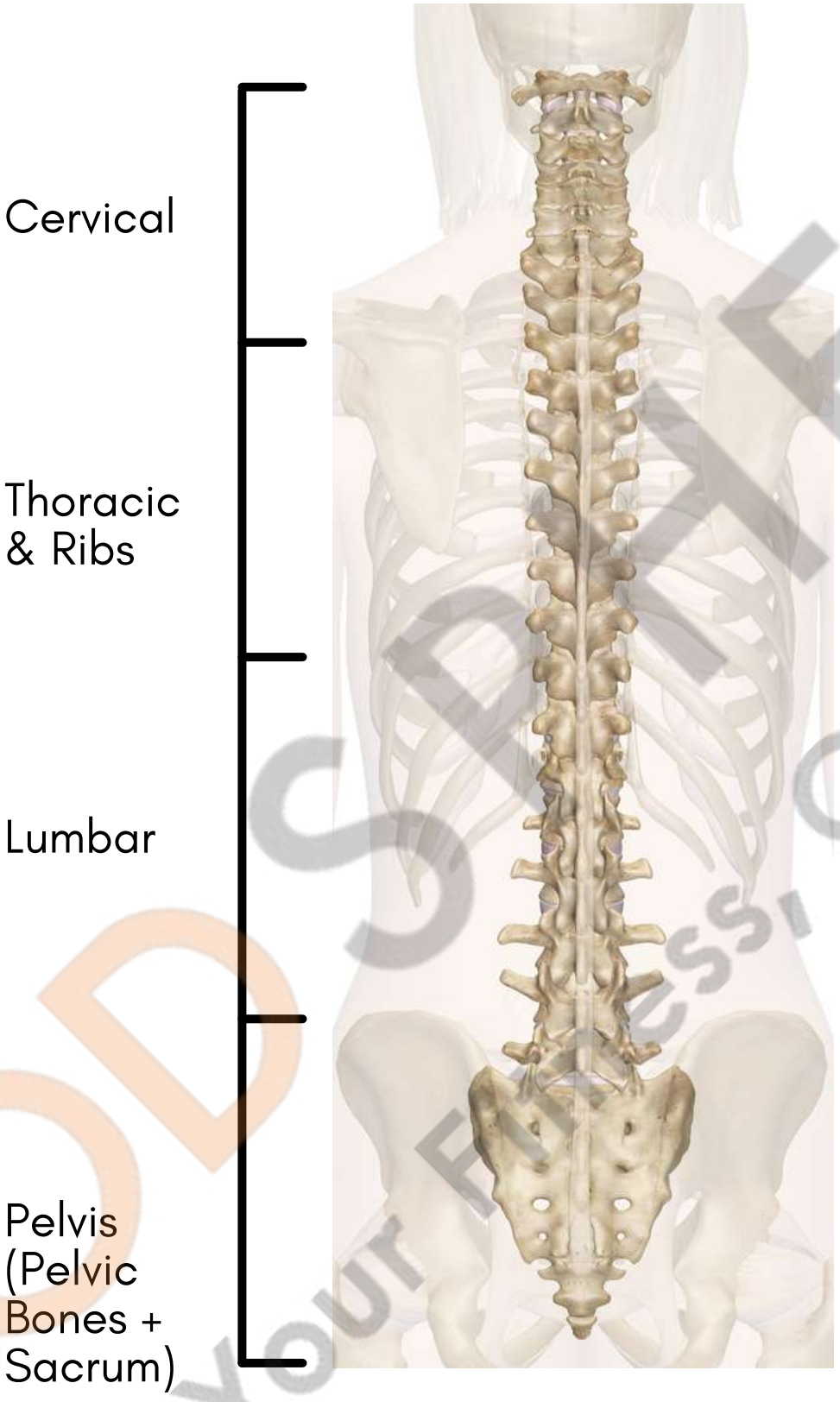
A **segment** is understood here as a part of the skeleton that we cannot isolate any further. For example, a backbend comes from the lumbar vertebrae, they all move together to bend. We cannot bend from some lumbar vertebrae and from other no, we cannot isolate them. We bend from our lower back. We can isolate the lumbar segment from the thoracic and the neck, though.

In yoga practice, if you cannot isolate a segment, you cannot do a specific yoga pose for it. We don't stress one vertebra at the time, we stress one segment of vertebrae.

The 14 skeletal segments are distributed as follows:

- 4 segments in the legs
- 4 segments in the axis
- 6 segments in the arms


Femur
Knee
Ankle
Toes


Cervical
Thoracic & Ribs
Lumbar
Pelvis (Pelvic Bones + Sacrum)

Clavicle &
Scapula

Humerus

Elbow

Radius &
Ulna

Wrist

Fingers

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Muscle Groups to Define Tension Areas

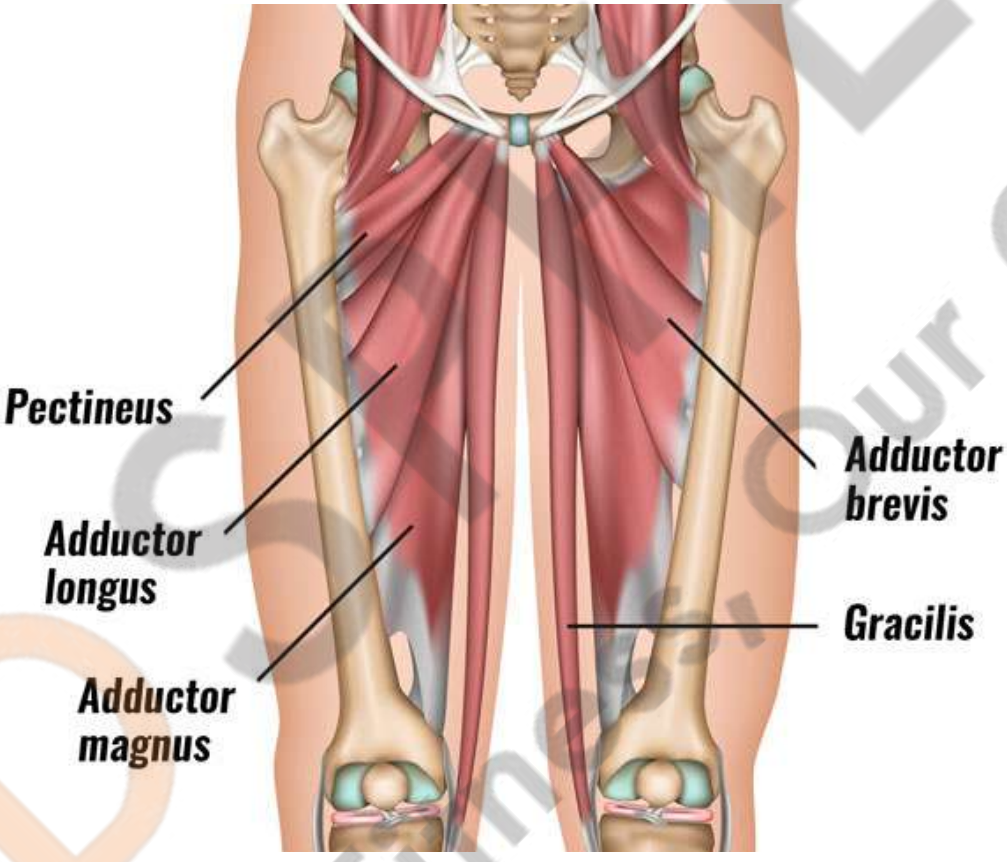
There are about 650 skeletal muscles in the body. In yoga practice, we can group them functionally into 10 groups of muscles. Most yoga poses are trying to target one or more of these 10 groups of muscles.

- Five groups of muscles in the lower body
- Five groups of muscles in the upper body

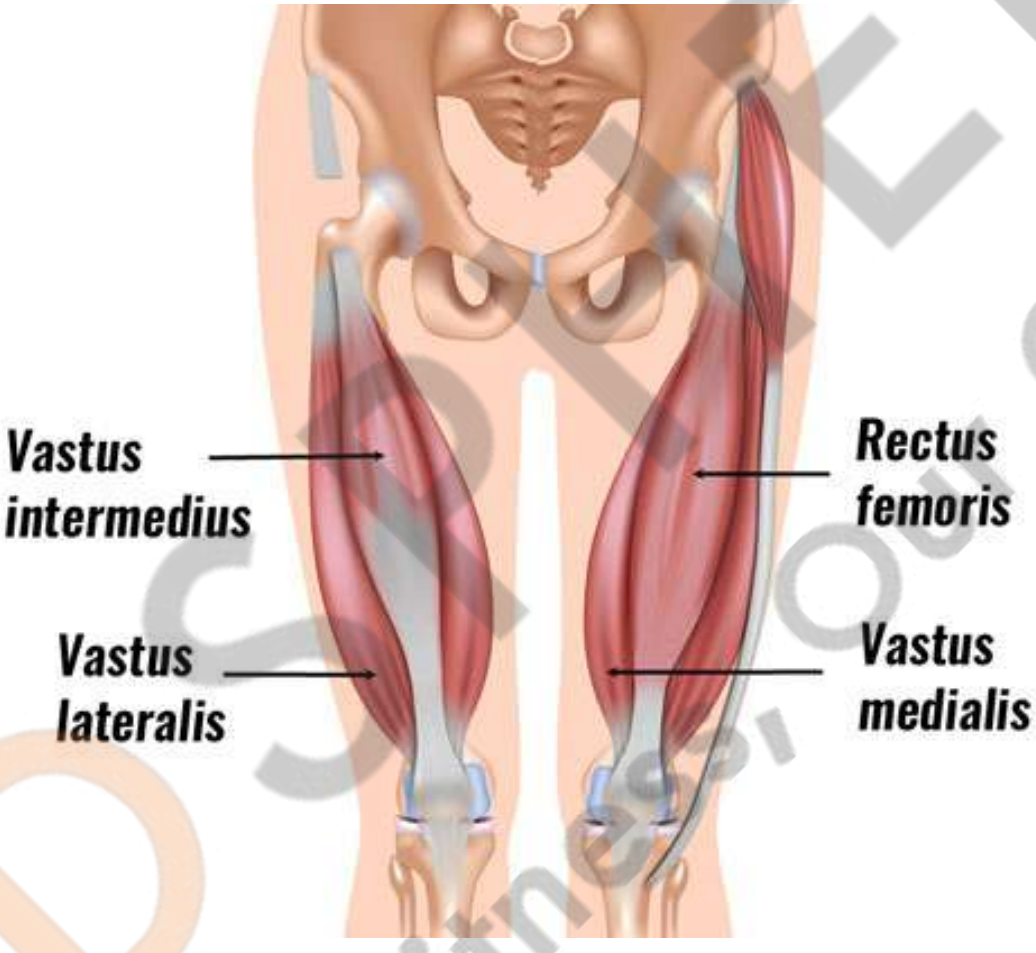
Each group works independently from other groups.

Lower Body – Anterior Muscles

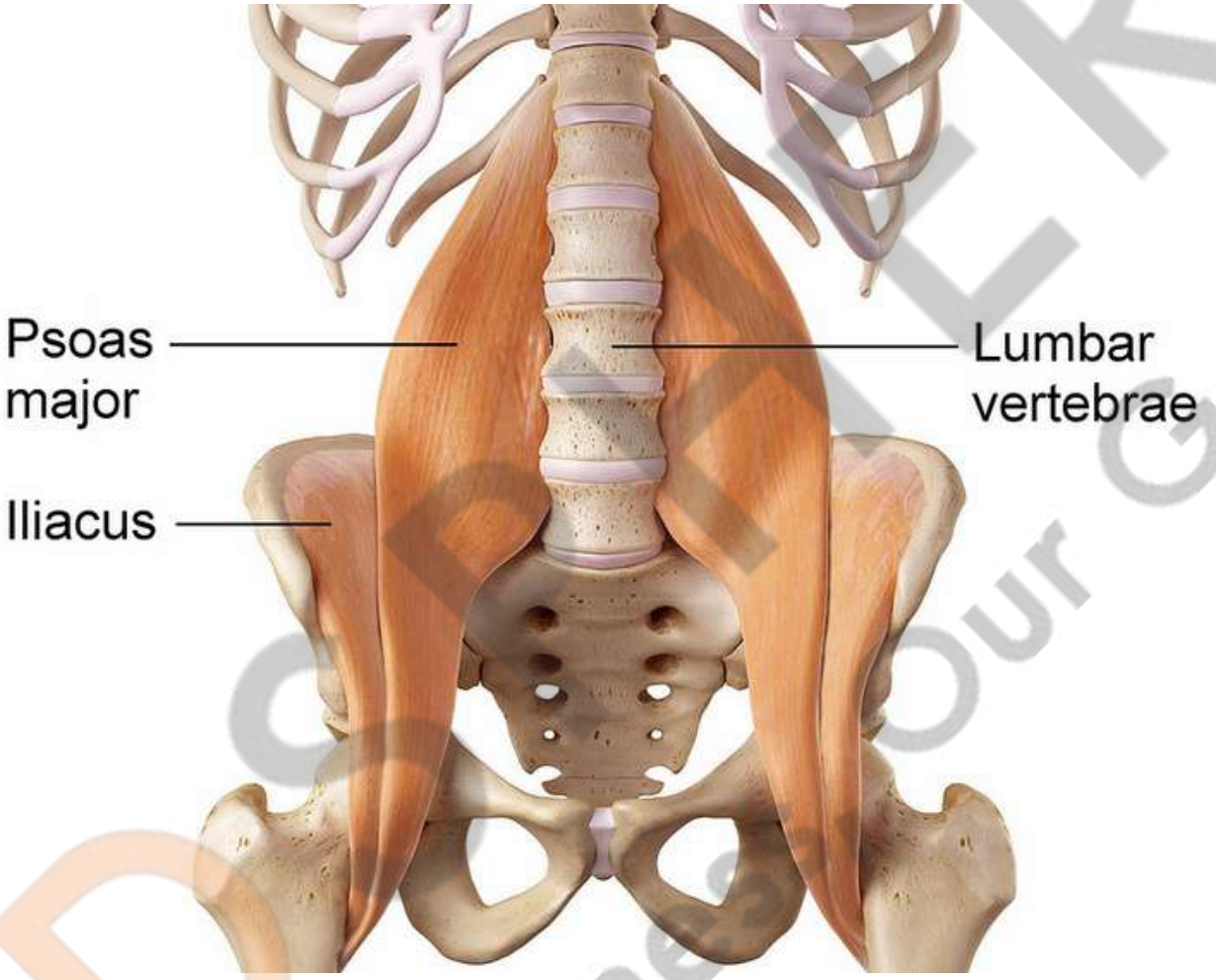
1. Groin Muscles (5 Muscles)

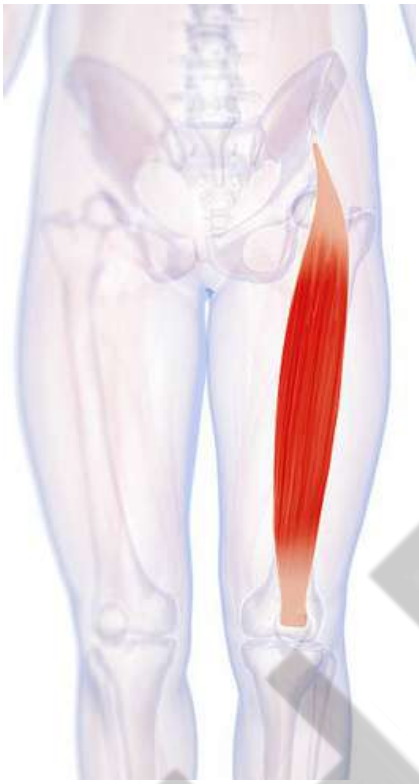


2. Quadriceps (4 Muscles)



3. Hip Flexors (4 Muscles)



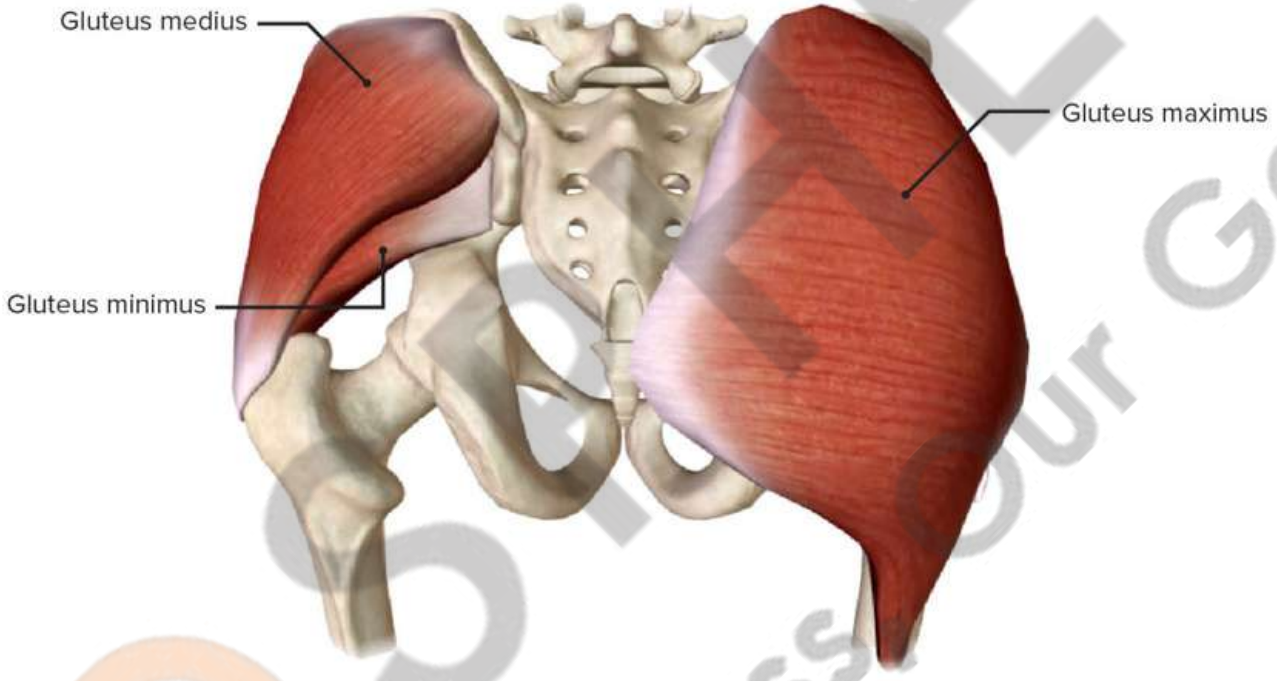


Rectus Femoris

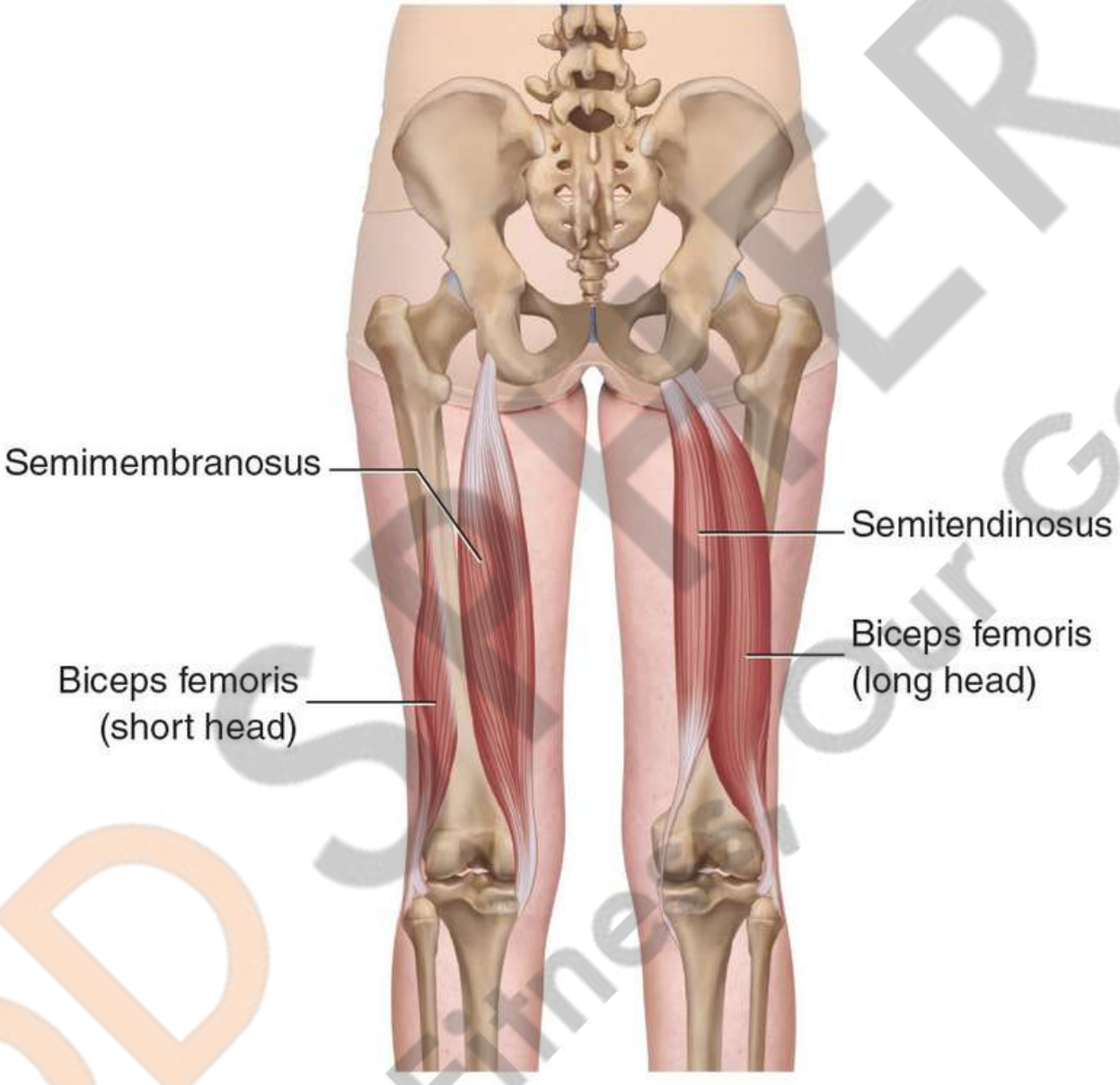
Sartorius

Lower Body – Posterior Muscles

1. Glutes (3 Muscles)



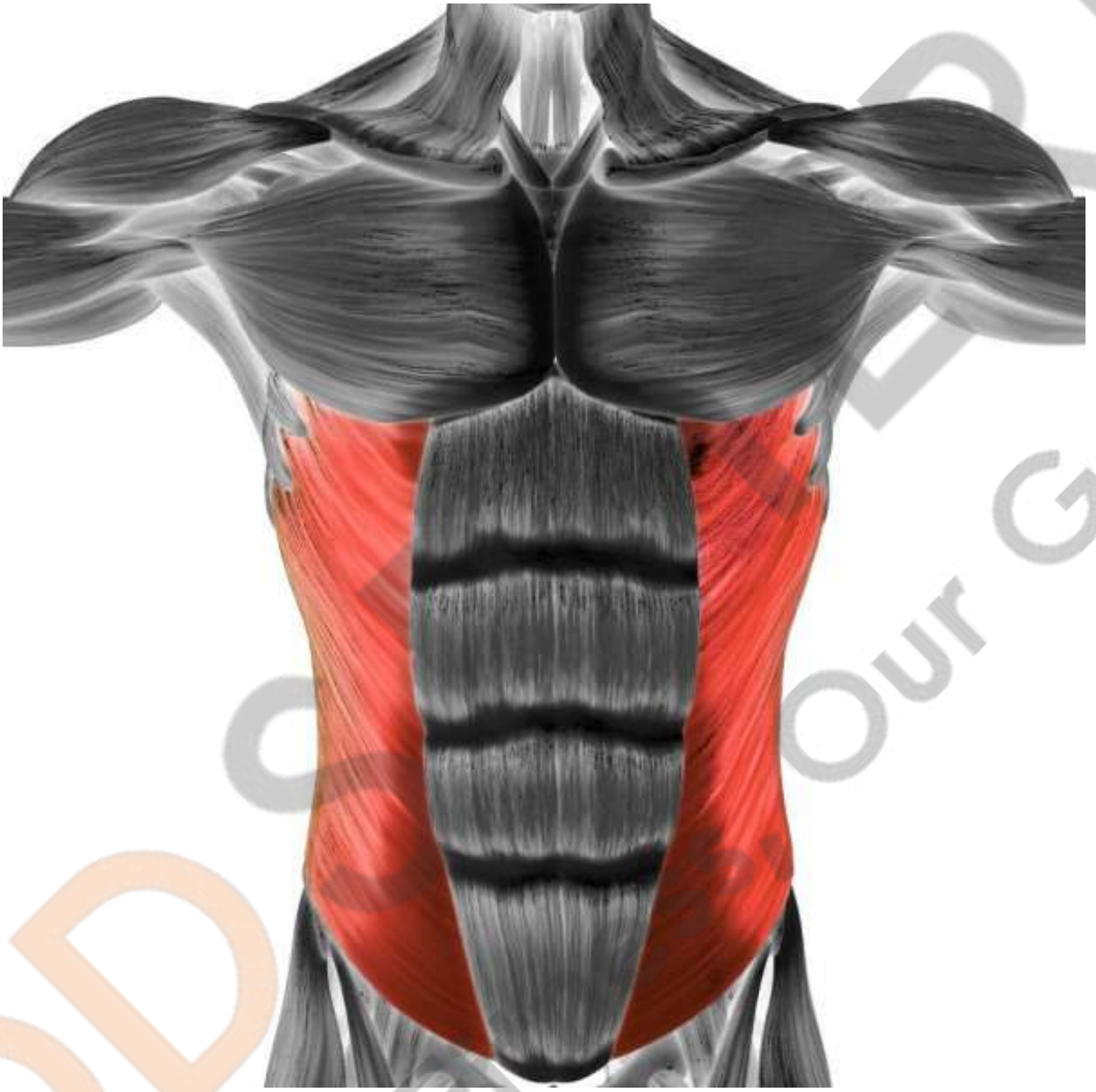
2. Hamstrings (4 Muscles)



Upper Body – Anterior Muscles

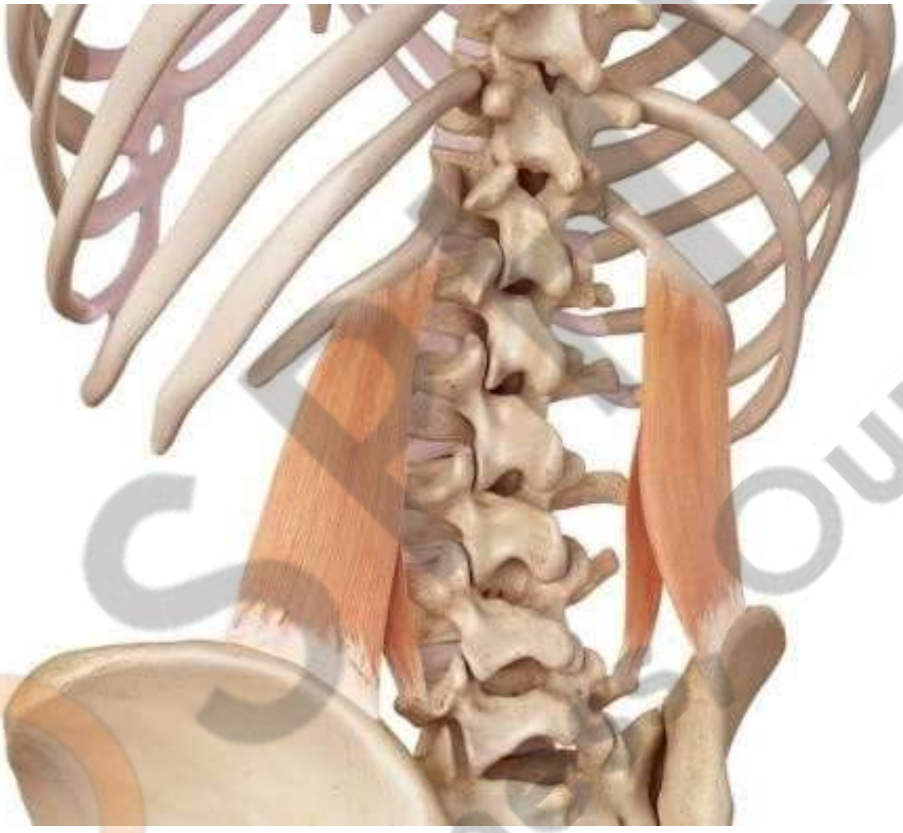
1. Rectus Abdominis

2. Obliques



Upper Body – Posterior Muscles

1. QLT (Quadratus Lumborum & Transverse Abdominis)



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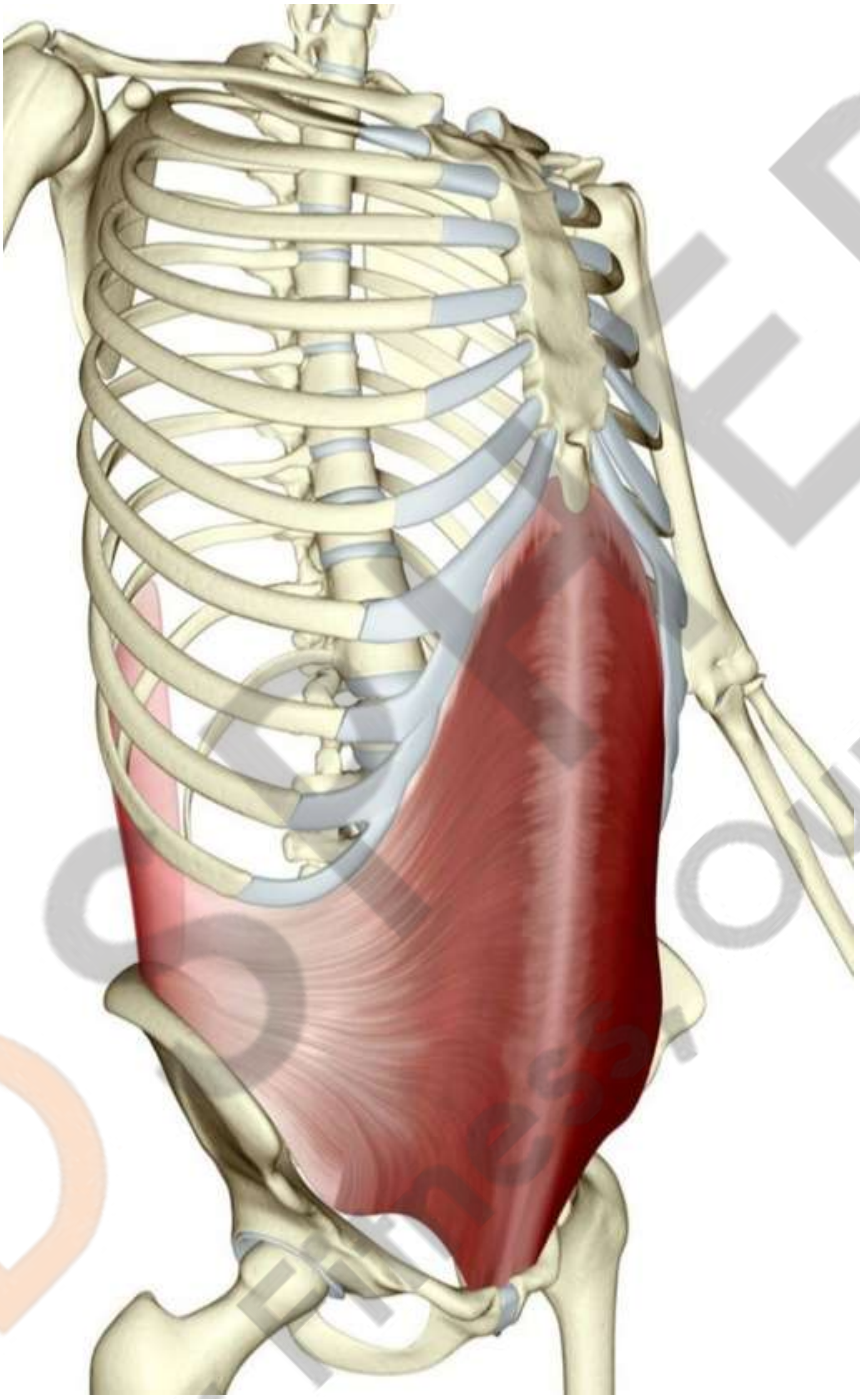
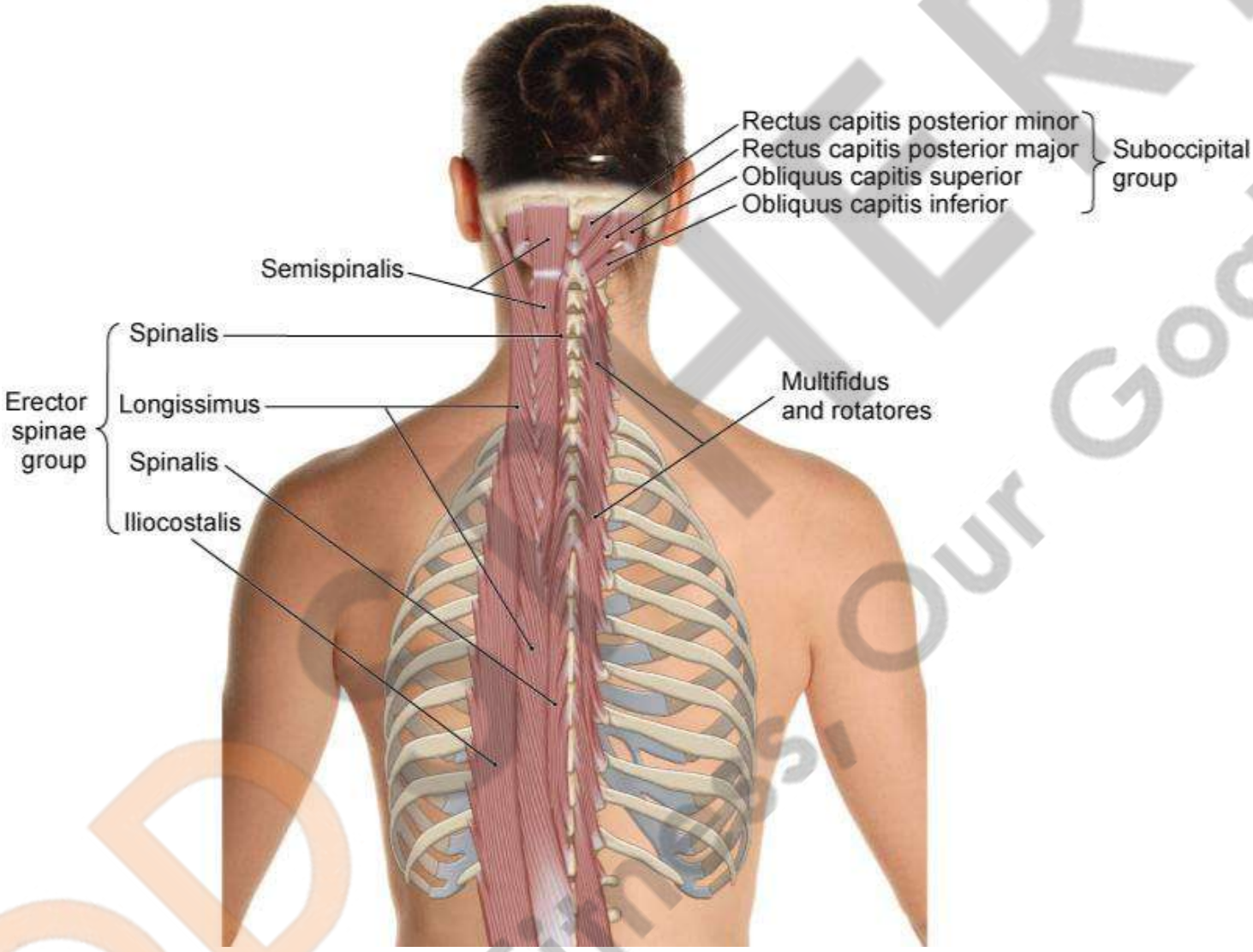
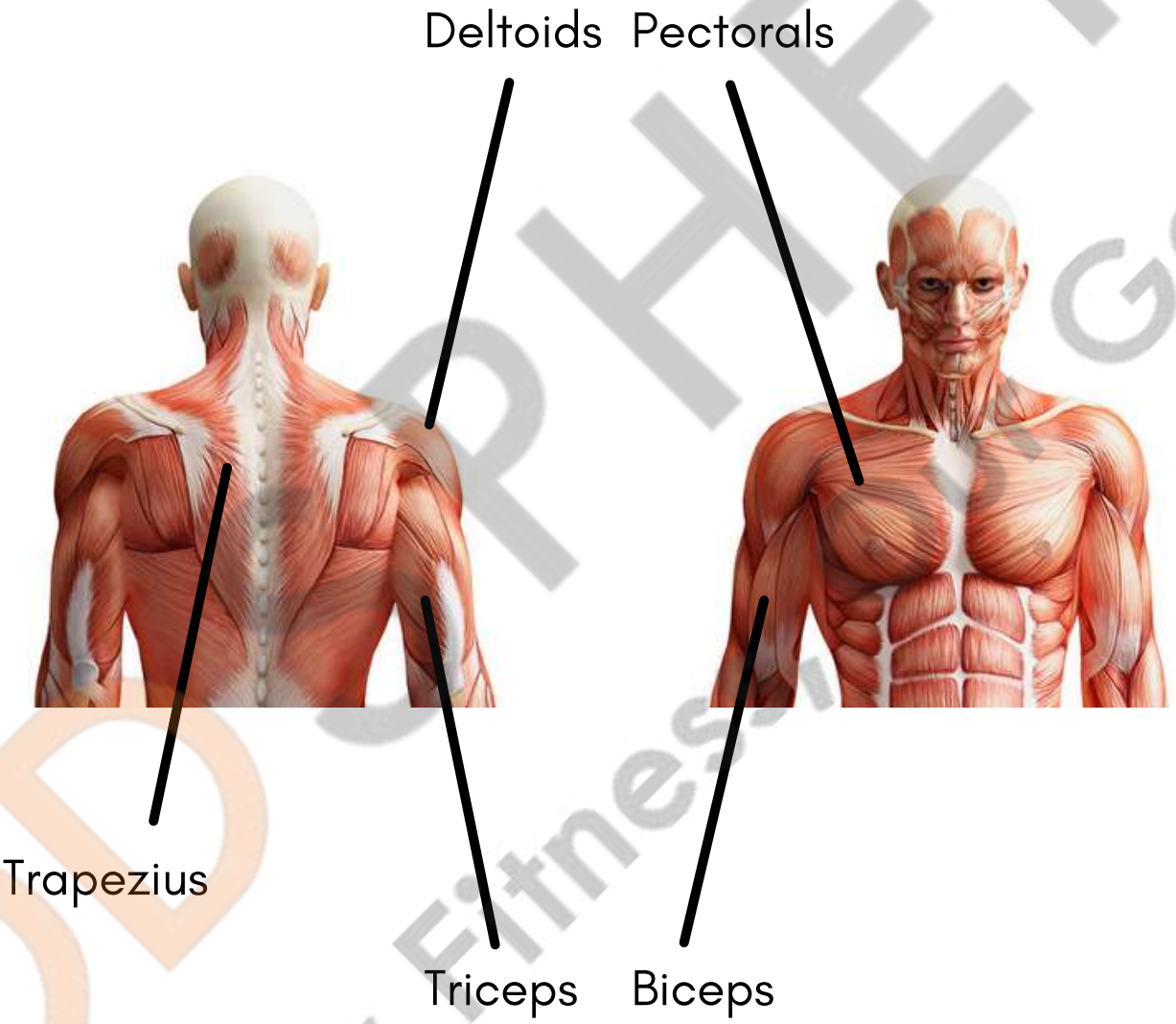


2. Thoracolumbar (muscles that run on each side of the spine)



3. Upper Body Muscles (muscles that move the scapula, clavicle and humerus)



TEACHING

YIN YOGA

Archetypal Postures and Their Variations

There are thousands of yoga poses but the vast majority of them are variations of seven archetypal poses (as per Yin Yoga Philosophy). This is why ancient books on yoga listed so few postures. These seven main positions in Yin Yoga are called archetypes because from these seven postures follow a multitude of variations. Understanding these seven archetypes is the key to teaching variations, using props, and making adjustments.

Seven Archetypal Poses

Shoelace Archetype

Saddle Archetype

Caterpillar Archetype

Spinal Twist Archetype

Dragonfly Archetype

Downward Dog Archetype

Dragon Archetype

These seven Yin Yoga positions target the ten myofascial groups in the legs, including the hamstrings, glutes, adductors, hips: quadriceps/flexors; torso: rectus abdominis, obliques, thoracolumbar group, quadratus lumborum and the upper body muscles, as well as the fourteen skeletal segments of the body.

Yin Yoga gives us the opportunity to slow down

Shoelace Archetype

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Hip joint and thoracolumbar spine (if you lean forward)
- Muscular: Glute muscles and thoracolumbar muscles (if you lean forward)

The Practice

- You can enter the pose from all 4's or from seated. As you enter the pose press into your hands and rock your weight back into your hips. Try to keep your hips even.
- Sit straight with your right leg drawn over your left so that your knees are stacked and your feet are sitting back near your hips with your hands at your sides.
- If you decide to fold forward, remain vigilant about the sensations you experience; make sure you feel this pose in your buttocks, outer hips, inner groin, or lower back rather than as a pull in your inner knees.
- You can rest your hands farther forward and round your back forward.
- Use the weight of your hands into the floor to distribute the impact of this pose to your hips instead of yourknees.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale and, using your hands or abdominal muscles, lift your spine back up vertebra by vertebra, stretching your legs out in front of your and leaning back on your hands. Rest this way for a fewbreaths.
- Repeat with the left leg on top.

Joint Movements

Poses in the "Shoelace Family", should:

- Flex the femur
- Externally rotate the hip joint, and try to flex the femur even more

These two actions will target the hip joint and the glute muscles. The position of the tibia provides information of how much is the femur rotating at the hip joint.

Where Not to Feel This Pose

In the knee. If you feel any discomfort in the knee, It is because the hip is not rotating enough and can be potentially injurious. In this case, we need to modify the shape of the pose by changing the position of the feet.

Variations of the Pose

In order to accommodate the pose to each person, reach the target areas and avoid to injure the knee, we have several options to place the feet in different ways.

- "Tight Shoelace": Feet are close to the hips.
- "Wide Shoelace": Feet are forward.
- "Lose Shoelace": Place one shin on top of the other one.
- "Untied Shoelace": One shin is in front of the other one.
- "Broken Shoelace": Same as previous but the front foot is placed more forward.

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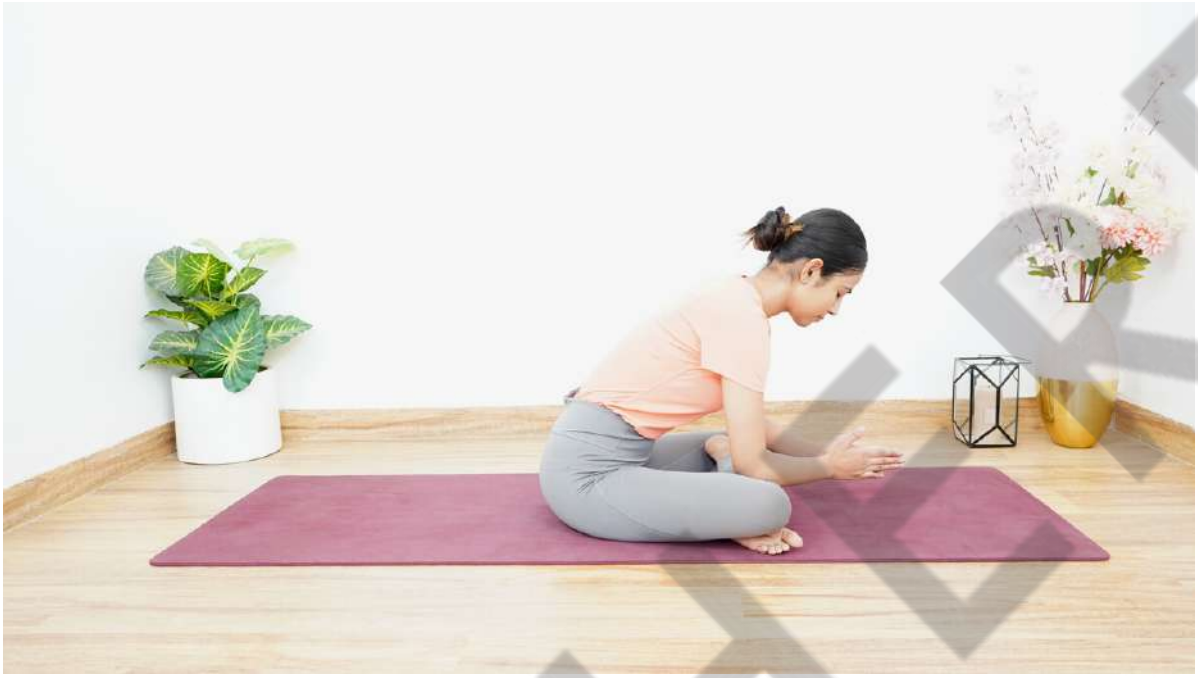

Lose Shoelace

Untied Shoelace

Use of Props in This Pose

1. If the external-hip-rotation range of motion is difficult for you, elevate your sitting bones on a cushion. If there is space between your knees, put a folded blanket there as well.

2. Stretch out your bottom leg to prevent too much pressure on your knees. This is called *Half Shoelace pose*.

3. If this still feels risky in your top knee, you can take Eye-of-the-Needle pose, which eliminates all gravitational pressure to your knees.

Benefits

- Affects the Liver, Gallbladder and Kidney meridians. If you're folding forward, the Urinary Bladder meridian will also be affected and the stomach compressed.
- It is a great hip opener, and decompression for the lower spine when folding forward.
- Externally rotates the hips, and stretches the inner thighs and groin.

Contraindications

- It can be hard on the pelvis and knees and can aggravate sciatica. If you have sciatica, elevate the hips by sitting on a cushion so the knees are below them. Beware of hips rotating backward while seated; Rotate them forward.
- In case of lower back disorders (which do not allow flexion of the spine) , do not allow the spine to round: keep the back as straight as you can.
- Pregnant women should not fold forward after the first trimester.

Saddle Archetype

(Also known as Supta Virasana, Reclining Hero Pose in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

Before we study Saddle Pose, let's observe the two poses Saddle can be divided into, either to analyse it and understand it, and/or to practice it.

Antler Pose

(Also known as Vajrasana, Adamantine, Thunderbolt Pose)

Seal Pose

Antler Pose

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Toes, ankles, knees
- Muscular: Quads muscles

We approach Saddle from here, because if someone cannot sit on their feet, or bend the knees, there is no point of going into Saddle yet. Antler pose is a preparation, and the safest way to get into Saddle.
If the student is not able to sit on the heels, then sitting on a block or a bolster can be a good modification.

Seal Pose

Target Areas

- *Skeletal: Spine (mainly lumbar)*

Variations of Seal

- *Legs width: Closer the legs greater the compression; legs* apart will decrease the compression
- Shoulders / scapula-clavicle: In elevation (up), muscles are less active and the spine "hangs" in between the shoulders. In depression (down), muscles are more active and the muscles of the back get a greater stress.

- Hands: Position of the hands is not important as long as it allows you to target the lumbar spine. We have to observe what the hands do to the arms, and what this does to the pose. (Sphinx pose is a variation of the hands)

These three variables modify the stress in the target area.

Saddle Pose in Detail

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Toes, ankles, knees, lumbar spine
- Muscular: Quadriceps and hip flexors

The Practice

- Sit on your feet with knees spread apart. For many, this is enough stretch for the ankles, knees, and thighs.
- Try to lower yourself backwards and support your weight on your arms. If this becomes easy, go to your elbows. If you feel comfortable, arch back and rest the weight on your head; eventually, you may rest your upper spine on the floor. Let the lower spine arch and take the pressure of the bend.
- ·Stay in the pose for 3-5 minutes.

- To come out, roll or lean to one side and unfold the legs one at a time. Lie on your belly with your legs outstretched for a moment before proceeding to the next pose.

Joint Movements

Poses in the "Saddle Family", should:

- Flex the knee
- Internally rotate the hip joint
- Extend the lumbar spine

Where Not to Feel This Pose

The knee shouldn't hurt; a discomfort from the internal rotation of the hip can be expected but never painful.

Variations of Saddle Pose

Since the tibia will go as far out as the internal rotation of the femur can go, we can vary the position of the feet:

- Totally turn out
- Parallel to the hips
- Underneath the glutes
- The position of the knees can alsovary

Use of Props in This Pose

- You can rest back on a bolster, but place it under your shoulders leaving your lower back unsupported to ask more of these tissues by stressing them appropriately.

- If you have any disc displacement or injury, it is advisable to place the bolster lengthwise, beginning at your sacrum, to support your whole spine. You can also lessen the flexion in the knees by placing a rolled blanket in the back crease of the knees. For tight ankles, place a cushion between your ankles and the floor.

- If you find the pose too difficult at this point but can flex your knees quite a bit, you can do Dragon Poseon each leg first; add Half-Saddle Pose next, then attempt full Saddle Pose.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Kidney meridian – organ as it flows through the sacrolumbar area and the longitudinal ligaments along the lumbar spine, as well as the kidneys themselves.
- Also affects the Stomach, Spleen, and Urinary Bladder lines.
- If your arms are overhead, you will also work the Heart and Lung meridians.
- Stretches the feet, and knees.
- Offers a deep opening in the sacral-lumbar arch.
- Stretches the hips flexors and quadriceps.
- It is excellent for athletes and people who do a lot of standing or walking.
- Stimulates the thyroid if the neck is dropped back
- If the feet are beside the hips, this becomes a good internal rotation of the hip.

Contraindications

- If you have an injury in your back or tight sacroiliac (SI) joints.
- Knees can be tested too much here.
- Ankles can protest.
- Any sharp or burning pain here, it's better to come out.

Half Saddle Pose

- This variation frees the pelvis because both legs are doing different movements. The pelvis of the bent leg rotates the femur externally which alleviate the stress in the quads and hip flexors.

The Practice

- Sit and stretch out your left leg, allowing your right leg to fold back with the foot near your buttocks.
- Rest back on your hands or elbows, or all the way back onto the floor.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale and lift up using your elbows and then your hands.
- Repeat on the other leg.

Benefits

- It is a variation of Saddle pose. The arch on the sacrolumbar spine is less than in the full Saddle but the stretch on the thigh is more.
- It is a back bend that helps to open the front side of the body.
- It also activates the Stomach meridian.

Use of Props in This Pose

- If you would prefer to put a little less flexion in your knee, place some padding under your buttocks and behind your bent knee. You can also have support under your back and head.

Variations

- You can vary this pose by coming up from the backbend and, keeping your right leg still folded back, spread your knees wide and fold toward the left leg.

- From the previous variation, come up; bring your torso centred between the legs and fold forward.

- Still with your right leg folded back and your knees still wide, twist toward the right and reach your left hand to the outside of the right leg and your right hand can reach for the inner left leg, or rest on the floor behind you.

Yin Yoga is simple. But simple does not mean easy.

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Caterpillar Archetype

(Also known as Paschimottanasana or Seated Forward Bend in different Yang Styles of Yoga)

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Spine (primarily lumbar)
- ·Muscular: Thoracolumbar muscles and hamstrings

The Practice

- Sit with both legs stretched out in front of you, feet about hip width apart or narrower if you prefer.
- Drop your chin to your chest so the muscles and ligaments at the base of the skull are stretched.
- Lean forward and try to grasp your ankles or feet, or allow your hands to rest on the floor.
- The thighs should be relaxed and a slight bend of the knees is fine as long as you still feel the stretch.
- Hold this pose 3-5 minutes.

Joint Movements

In order to stretch the hamstrings, the pelvis has to move forward (anterior tilt). By keeping the spine straight, the pelvis can move into anteversion and stretch the posterior legs, but the back is not getting stretched. If you round your back (flexion of the spine), you can target the thoracolumbar muscles but the pelvis moves back in posterior tilt which prevent the stretch of the hamstrings. Therefore, there is no one way to do Caterpillar or any forward fold, it will depend on your particular needs.

Use of Props in This Pose

- If you have sciatica, have tight hamstrings and/or lower back muscles, or you experience pain in your spine after performing this pose, bend both knees and put your feet flat on the floor; you may wish to put a rolled blanket or bolster under your knees for support.

- If you have pulled a hamstring in the past, it is best to keep your knees slightly flexed by placing a bolster under them.

- If you need support for your neck, rest your forehead on a cushion / bolster placed on your legs.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Urinary Bladder meridian as it flows down the back of your body and backs of your legs.
- It is one of the most basic and important postures.
- Stretches the legs and the entire spinal column and balances the chi flow.
- Stresses the ligaments along the back of the spine.
- Compresses the stomach organs, which helps strengthen the organs of digestion.
- Stimulates the kidneys.
- Since the heart is below the spine, the heart is massaged.
- Helps to cure impotency and leads to sex control.
- It is a great aid in relaxing the mind and drawing the senses inward, therefore it is a good preparation formeditation.

Contraindications

- It can aggravate sciatica. If you have sciatica, elevate the hips by sitting on a cushion, until the knees are below the hips, or avoid this pose entirely. Beware of hips rotating backward while seated; we want them to rotate forward.
- If you have any lower back disorders which do not allow flexion of the spine, then do not allow the spine to round; keep the back as straight as you can.

Variation: Half Butterfly

(Also known as Janusirsasana or Head-to Knee Pose in different Yang Styles of Yoga)

This pose is the asymetrical version of Caterpillar. Therefore, it shares the same target areas, but since both legs are doing different things, you can:

- Stretch one hamstring more because the pelvis is freer.
- Isolate one side of the back during the stretch.

In this variation, you can move the torso forward towards the center, which gives more space to the ribcage that won't get compressed against the thigh and you can stretch your hamstrings deeper. Or you can move the torso all the way across your extended leg and get a deeper lateral stretch of the torso.

The Practice

- Sit with one leg stretched forward and the other leg folded with the foot near the opposite groin.
- Drop your chin to your chest, lean forward and try to grasp hold of your ankle or foot, or rest your hands on thefloor.
- Hold this pose for 3-5 minutes.

Joint Movements

- The pelvis can be moved to one side due to the proportion of the leg.

Use of Props in This Pose

- Put a cushion / bolster under your bent knee if it is not resting on the floor or if it feels sensitive in any way.

- For tight or overstressed hamstrings you can bend your left knee, placing a cushion/ bolster underneath it for support, and put the sole of your foot on the floor before folding forward.

- You may rest your forehead over a cushion/ bolster.

Benefits

- Stretches the back of the straight leg and the spine on the opposite side.
- Helps to correct imbalances in the flow of chi on each side of the spine.
- Helps to decompress the spine, and to alleviate low back problems.
- Stimulates the Bladder meridian – organ as it flows down the back of your body and the backs of your legs.

Contraindications

- Diarrhea or asthma.
- If you have a knee injury, make sure you do not flex it too much. Use a folded blanket for support.
- Lumbar disc herniation or a serious lower back injury.

Dragonfly Archetype

(Also known as Upavistha Konasana in different Yang Styles of Yoga)

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Hips
- Muscular: Groin

The Practice

- Sit with the legs about 90 degrees or more apart and then lean forward.
- Try to touch your hands on the floor in front of you. As your flexibility increases try to rest first your elbows and eventually your head on the floor.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale and walk your hands back in, bringing your spine back to an upright position. Bring your legs together and rest back on your hands for a moment.
- You may alternate this pose with Lateral DragonflyPose to emphasize the side body more.

Use of Props in This Pose

- If your legs do not open very far, bend your knees and place some padding under them to lessen the pull on the hamstrings. This will also allow you to fold forward a little better as it is easier to bend forward from the hips when the knees are bent.

- If you have tight hamstrings or are avoiding forward bends due to back issues or sciatica, you could also do this pose lying on your back with your legs up the wall.

- Your hands can be on the floor in front of you, you can rest on your elbows, or you may support yourself on a cushion/ bolster.

Benefits

- Affects the Urinary Bladder meridian on the back of the legs and on the back, and the Liver and Kidney lines through the groin, and the Spleen lines through the inner knees.
- The twisting version will stimulate the Gall Bladder meridian along the side of the torso.
- Stretches the back of the thighs, lower spine and the groin.
- Provides a gentle opening to inner knees.
- Stimulates the ovaries.
- It can be frustrating for a beginner as progress seems slow to non-existent. The only advice is to be persistent. Stay with it and as you progress in the other forward bends, this pose will eventually respond to your efforts as well.

Contraindications

- It can aggravate sciatica. In this case, elevate the hips. Beware of hips rotating backward while seated; we want them to rotate forward.
- If you have any lower back disorders which do not allow flexion of the spine, do not allow the spine to round; keep the back as straight as you can.
- If you have any inner knee trauma or issues, bring the legs closer together or tighten the top of the legs (the quadriceps) to engage the kneecaps.

Spinal Twist Archetype

(Also known as a variation of Supta Natarajasana in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Spine

The essence of a twist is that the pelvis and shoulders are facing opposite directions, irrespective if the pose is standing, sitting or lying down. Twist is a counter stretch for forward folds and back bends since it releases tension in the spine.

The Practice

- Lie on your back with your knees bent, your feet flat on the floor, and your arms out to the sides for support.
- On an exhalation, allow your knees to drop to the left while keeping the right side of your upper back and shoulder weighted toward the floor.
- Bring your right arm up to rest on the floor alongside your head (place a prop under your arm if it does not rest easily on the floor). If you would like to direct the impact more specifically into your right shoulder, turn your head away from your raised arm. If you want to feel it more along your upper back, look toward your raised arm.
- Stay in the pose for 3-5 minutes.

- To come out, first slide your right arm back down beside your torso on an exhale. Use an inhalation, your abdominal muscles, and your hands to bring your knees back up into a neutral position. Rest with your feet on the floor, and your knees dropping into each other.
- Stay here for a few breaths before repeating the pose to the other side.

Joint Movements

The twist majorly comes from the thoracic spine. Keeping the knee on the floor will depend on:

- Femur adduction
- Length of the femur
- Ability of the spine to twist

For some people, the knee will never touch the floor. Proportion also plays an important role when twisting. The position of the arms and legs is not important as long as it allows to properly stress the target area.

The spine, besides twisting, can be in three different orientations:

- In a backbend
- In a neutral position
- In a forward fold

Where Not to Feel the Pose
In the thigh or knee

Variations of the Pose

If you would like to emphasize drawing chi more toward your lower back, hug your knees closer toward your torso. (If you would like to target your hips and sacroiliac region, then leave your knees in line with your hips or even a little lower.)

OR

For an even deeper twist, cross one knee over the other before going over into the twist. In this crossed- knee, you may choose to rest your legs below hip-height to emphasize the pull in your hips, or pull your knees in toward your ribs to strengthen the sensations in your lower back.

You can keep your left (bottom) leg straight and simply bend your right (top) knee as you twist to the left.

Use of Props in This Pose

- If your knees do not rest on the floor, or if your lower back is sensitive or has been injured, use a bolster or folded blanket to catch their weight.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Kidney, Bladder, Urinary, and Gallbladder meridians.
- Bringing the knees more to the chest can relieve sciatica.
- Massages the stomach and all internal organs.
- Twisting at the end of the practice helps to restore equilibrium in the nervous system and release tension in the spine

Contraindications

- Pregnancy
- Back or neck surgery

Downward Dog Archetype

NOTE: Downward Dog is rarely practiced in Yin Yoga.

(Also known as Inverted V-Shape Pose, Adho Mukha Svanasana in different Yang Styles of Yoga)

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Fingers, wrist, radius, ulna, humerus, scapula, clavicle, thoracic spine, hips, ankles, toes
- Muscular: Upper body muscles and hamstrings

The Practice

- Come onto your fours. Form a table such that your back forms the table top and your hands and feet form the legs of the table.
- As you breath out lift the hips up, straightening the knees and elbows, form an inverted V-shape with the body.
- Hands are shoulder width apart, feet are hip width apart and parallel to each other. Toes point straight ahead.
- Press your hands into the ground. Widen through the shoulder blades.
- Keep the neck lengthened by touching the ears to the inner arms.
- Hold the downward dog pose and take long deep breaths.
- Look towards the navel.
- Exhale. Bend the knees, return to table pose.
- Relax.

Joint Movements

All bones have a different degree of torsion; it depends on the torsion of the humerus, the elbow bends in different directions. Therefore, some people have to turn the shoulders in, others have to turn it out; some people have to retract the scapula while others have to protract it. What is happening in the shoulders is very different from person to person.

Benefits

- Removes stiffness from the shoulder joints, wrists, hands and fingers. Also strengthens the upper body.
- The entire spinal column is stretched and lengthened. The compression between the inter vertebral discs is eased.
- While holding this posture the abdominal muscles remain tensed & engaged & are consequently strengthened.
- Removes fatigue & restores energy.
- Helps to relieve depression, insomnia, stress, back pain and headaches, and symptoms of menopause.
- The fluid in the lungs rush from the bottom of the lungs to the top, thereby allowing the much needed airing out of the broad lower lungs. This strengthens our lungs and respiratory system.

Contraindications

- High Blood Pressure
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Detached eye retina, weak eye capillaries, dislocated shoulder /shoulder injury or diarrhea
- Pregnancy

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Dragon Archetype

(Also known as Ashwa Sanchalanasana or Equestrian Pose in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

Target Areas

- Skeletal: Ankles, knees, femur, pelvis, hips, lumbar spine
- Muscular: Hip flexors

The Practice

- Place one foot forward on the floor in front of you and rest the opposite knee on the floor behind you.
- Use your hands for balance and slowly lower the thigh of your rear leg to the floor so the top/front of the thigh takes the strain. Depending on your flexibility, you might also feel a stretch in the groin of the front leg.
- If your stance is not too wide, you can push down on the front knee and exaggerate the stretch on the ankle and Achilles tendon. If your stance is wide, you will feel the hip flexors on the back leg more.
- Try to hold Dragon 3-5 minutes then change sides.
- To come out, bring the front knee back in line with the other knee and rest back in Child's Pose.

Joint Movements

- Both legs move the pelvis asymmetrically, which is fundamental for the strength of the movement.
- Different positions of the front foot create stress in different areas.

Benefits

- Affects Stomach, Spleen, Liver, Gall Bladder, Kidneys and Urinary Bladder meridians.
- Stretches the groin, ankles, and hip flexors.
- Makes backbends easier to do because the pelvis becomes freer in its movements.

Contraindications

- It can be uncomfortable for the kneecap or ankle. If you are working on your flexibility, the back thigh will be at a 90-degree angle to the front thigh, putting a lot of weight on the kneecap. Support the back knee with a blanket, or place a bolster under the shin, allowing the back knee to be off the floor.

Variation of the Pose

You can also place your hands or elbows on the inside of your front leg, which is especially helpful if you are pregnant.

Yin Yoga Postures

There are not nearly as many asanas required in the yin style of yoga as are found in the more active practices. There are perhaps three dozen postures at most (excluding variations). In the next section, we will discover the most common poses and see them in detail, including their variations, options, and some contraindications. Take into account that the asanas presented will not exhaust the possible poses one can do in Yin Yoga, and that some teachers and text books refer to the asanas with different names.

Butterfly Pose

(Also known as Baddha Konasana or Bound Angle Pose in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- Sit with the soles of the feet touching together and lean forward. If you start with the feet closer to the groin, the groin muscles are stretched more. If you start with the feet further from the groin, the lower spine is stretched more.
- Hold the pose 3-5 minutes.

Use of Props in this Pose

- If you have a weak or injured knee or hip, place a cushion under the corresponding thigh(s) for support.
- You may also rest on top of a bolster or pillow.

Benefits

- Affects the Gall Bladder lines on the outside of the legs as well as the Urinary Bladder lines running along the spine in the lower back.
- If the feet are close to the groin, the stretch is felt in the inner thighs (the adductor muscles). The Kidney and Liver lines are being stimulated.
- Stretches the lower spine and groin without requiring loose hamstrings.
- If the legs are straighter and the feet are farther away from the groin, the hamstrings will get more of a stretch.
- Good for the kidneys and prostate gland; highly recommended for people suffering from urinary problems.
- Removes heaviness in the testicles and regulates periods, helps ovaries function properly, and makes childbirth easier.

Contraindcations

- This pose can aggravate sciatica. If you have sciatica, elevate the hips by sitting on a cushion, until the knees are below the hips, or avoid this pose entirely. Beware of hips rotating backward while seated; we want them to rotate forward.
- If you have any lower back disorders which do not allow flexion of the spine, then do not allow the spine to round; keep the back as straight as you can or do the reclining version.
- Avoid dropping the head down if the neck has suffered whiplash or has reverse curvature.

Lying Butterfly Pose / Reclined Bound Angle

The Practice

- Bring your feet together and drop your knees out to the sides.
- Rest back on your elbows or a bolster, or lie back on pillows or on the floor with your hands on your abdomen.
- You can also place pillows under the thighs for added support if you have a tight groin or sensitive knees.

Benefits

- Stimulates abdominal organs like the ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys.
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation.
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees.
- Helps relieve the symptoms of stress, mild depression, menstruation and menopause.

Child's Pose

(Also known as Balanasa in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- Bring your feet together and drop your knees out to the sides.
- Rest back on your elbows or a bolster, or lie back on pillows or on the floor with your hands on your abdomen.
- You can also place pillows under the thighs for added support if you have a tight groin or sensitive knees.

Variations and Use of Props

- If knee issues exist, you may need to place a towel or blanket between thighs and calves or avoid the pose altogether.
- You may need a blanket or other padding under the ankles to reduce discomfort on the top of the feet.
- Can be done with arms stretched forward, which may avoid placing too much pressure on the neck (this reduces the shoulder relaxation).
- If you cannot get your buttocks to your heels, the head will have a lot of weight on it. Support the neck by placing the forehead on hands or on a bolster.
- Allow the knees to be as close together as is comfortable, but they do not have to touch. If there is any uncomfortable pinching in the lower belly and tops of the front hips, separate the knees wider.
- You may like to place a bolster under your chest.

Benefits

- The Spleen and Stomach meridiansare compressed while the Kidneys and Urinary Bladder meridians are stretched.
- Gently stretches the spine and is always a nice counter pose for backbends.
- Inclines the head so the heart can rest insteadof trying to force blood upward to the brain.
- It is a healing, restful pose – useful any time a break is needed.
- Gentle compresses the stomach and chest and benefits the organs of digestion.
- Psychologically soothing when feeling cold, anxious, or vulnerable.
- It can relieve back and neck pain when the head is supported.
- If the knees are fairly close together, rocking gently side to side can help stimulate the flow of blood and lymph fluids in the upper chest and breast tissues.

Contraindications

- Serious back or knee injuries
- Pregnancy
- Recent or current diarrhea

Wide-Knee Child's Pose (One of the variations of Frog Pose)

The Practice

- From Child's Pose, spread your knees as wide as they are willing to go and keep your hips back in your arches.
- Rest forward on your forearms or chest, with your head either resting on your forearms or turned to one side.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, bring your hands forward and raise your hips away from the floor, then lift one knee and bring it toward the centre, following with the other knee.
- Rest in Child's Pose for a few moments.

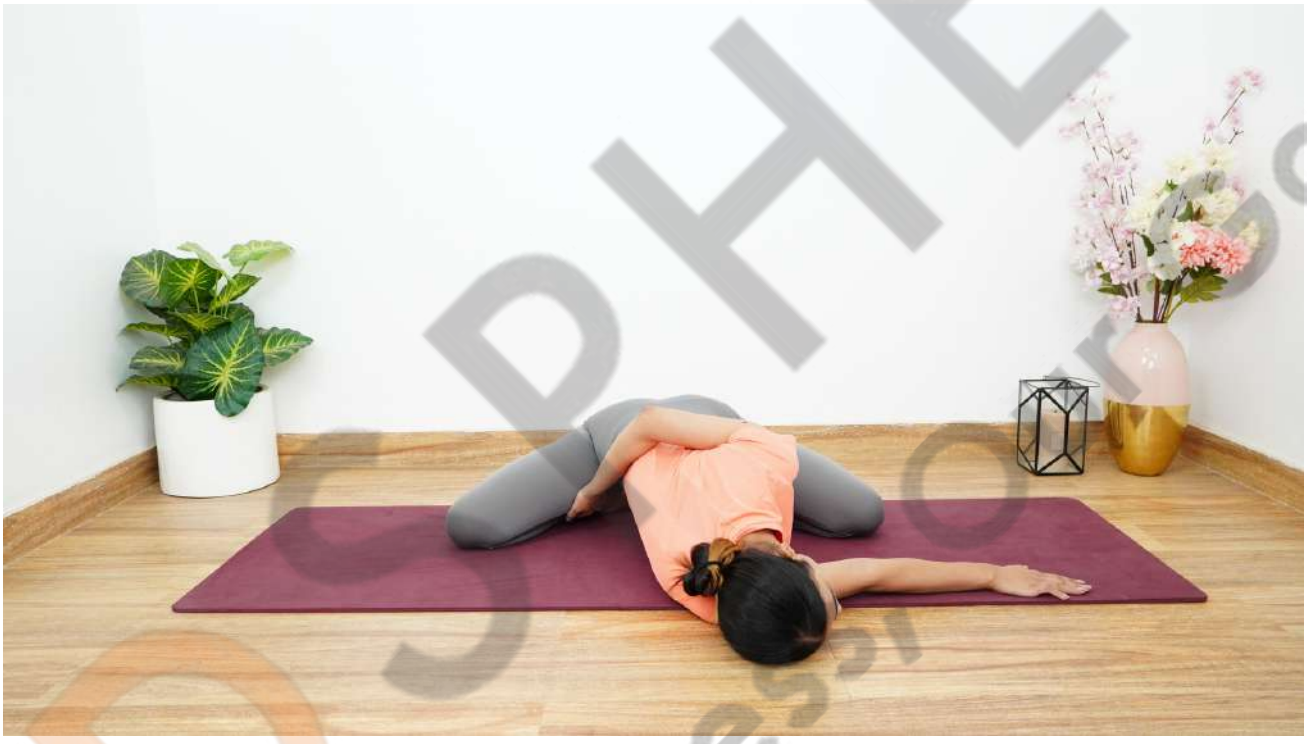
Benefits

- Affects the Liver channel.
- Increases the therapeutic effects of the traditional Child's Pose.

Contraindications

- Recent or chronic injury to the knees, hips, or legs.

Wide-Knee Child's Pose (With Twist)



The Practice

- Begin in Child's Pose, spread your knees as wide as they are willing to go, keeping your hips back near your feet.
- Twist to the left and take your right shoulder toward your left knee; rest it on the floor with your arm outstretched.
- Your left hand can reach around and rest on your lower back, or come around to your inner right thigh.
- Rest your head on the floor or your upper right arm.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes. Repeat on the other side.
- To come out, bring your right hand back to the floor, and push down through your hands. With your weight on both hands, bring the knees back together -one after the other one-, resting in Child's Pose for a few breaths.

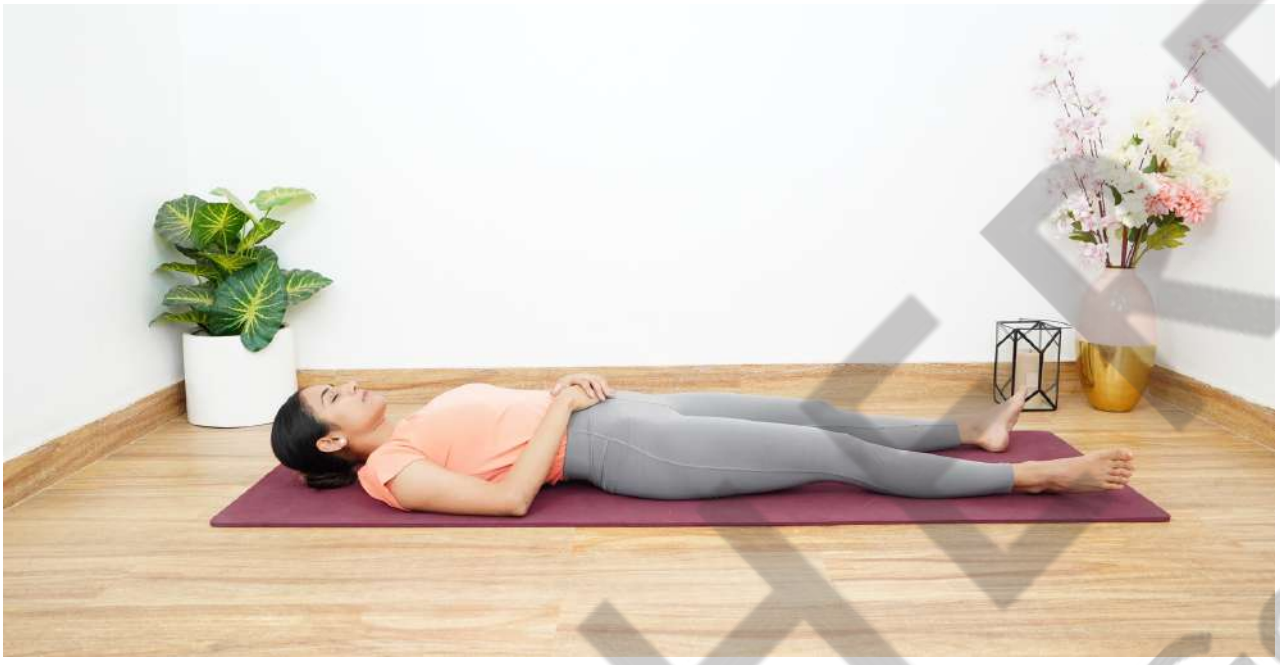
Benefits

- Affects the Spleen and the Stomach meridians.
- Massages the internal organs.
- Opens the side-body to stimulate the heart and lungs.

Contraindications

- Recent or chronic injury to the knees, hips, or legs.
- Shoulder Issues

Corpse Pose



- Alternately, you can allow your arms to rest on your body.

- You can also place a thin blanket under the head for added neck support, and/or a bolster under the knees to release any tension in the lower back.

Benefits

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression.
- Relaxes the body.
- Reduces headache, fatigue, and insomnia.
- Helps to lower blood pressure.

Contraindications

- Back injury or discomfort
- Pregnancy

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Lateral Dragonfly Pose

The Practice

Part 1

- Sit straight with your legs in a wide straddle.
- Shift forward and lean to the left, placing your left elbow on the floor along the inside of your leg (or on a cushion) and allowing your head to rest in your left hand.
- Your right hand can stay at your side, or you can rest your right arm across your head, or reach for your leftfoot.
- Hold this pose for 3-5 minutes.

Part 2

- Release your left elbow and rotate your torso so you are resting facedown over your left leg with your arms extended and relaxed on either side of the leg.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale and rise up.
- Bring your body back to centre for a few breaths before repeating on the other side.

Benefits

- Slowly opens your side body for Lung and Heart Meridian stimulation.

Dragonfly (With Twist)

The Practice

- Sit upright with your legs spread out as wide apart as they are willing to go in a straddle. If they do not pull open very far, it may be more beneficial to bend your knees and put the feet flat on the floor before bending forward.
- Take your right hand behind you toward your left thigh, and the left hand over to the outside of your right leg. If your right hand cannot reach all the way around, place it on the floor behind you.
- Keep your spine upright between your hips as you twist toward the right.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, exhale, release the hands, and bring your body back to centre.
- Repeat the twist toward the other side.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Spleen meridian along the inner leg and both the Spleen and Stomach meridians as they flow along the abdomen.
- Stimulates the Gall Bladder along the side of the torso.
- Helps to increase circulation in the abdomen and internal organs.

Eye-of-the-Needle Pose

The Practice

- Lie on your back with your feet on the floor and your knees bent; place your right ankle on top of your left knee.
- Draw your left knee toward your chest, reach your hands around your shin, and interlace your fingers.
- As you draw your knee toward you, keep your sacrum down and your shoulders and head on the floor.
- Remain in this pose for 3-5 minutes, and switch legs.
- After both sides have been held for 3-5 minutes, bend your knees and roll to your side, using your hands to sit up.

Variation

- If it is difficult to reach through and clasp your hands, press your left foot against the wall and cross your right ankle over your left knee, while your hands rest on the floor. Place the left foot as far down as it can come withoutlifting the sacrum off the floor. Hold the pose for 3-5 minutes and switch legs.

Benefits

- Stretches and opens the outer hips and low back.
- Improves circulation throughout the legs, hips, and back, which can help reduce pain caused by stiffness and inactivity.
- It is a soothing counter-pose to backbends and spinal twists.
- Drawing your limbs in toward your torso causes your mind to naturally turn inward, which helps calm your thoughts, relieve stress, and soothe anxiety.
- Increases blood flow to the pelvis and surrounding organs, which helps reduce digestive discomforts and menstrual pain.

Fish Pose

The Practice

- With your feet together as in Butterfly Pose, bring your elbows back under your shoulders to rest on the floor.
- Lift your chest while arching your back. Allow your head to drop back and rest on the trapezius muscles, or simply drop your head forward toward your chest.
- Keep your hands beside your hips.
- Stay in this pose 2-3 minutes.
- To come out, move your elbows forward then bring your chin to your chest and lie down. Extend your legs straightout.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Lung, Heart, and Intestine meridians as you extend the tissues in the chest and abdomen while widening and opening the front of the body.

Half Shoelace Pose

The Practice

- From a seated position, stretch your left leg out in front of you.
- Take your right leg and cross it over the left, bending your knee, placing your right ankle by your left hip and your right knee over the left.
- If you are not to your edge, begin to slowly fold forward at the waist.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale and bring your torso upright.
- Repeat on the other leg.

Variation

- If you have overstressed hamstrings, put a folded blanket under the knee of the outstretched leg to avoid full extension.

- If your body does not come forward over your front leg at all due to tight hips and/or a tight lower back, then it is better to substitute it for Eye-of-the-Needle pose.

Benefits

- It is a great alternative to the full Shoelace Pose if you have very tight hips.
- Continues to nourish the Gallbladder meridian along the outer hip of the bent leg, while adding emphasis to the Urinary Bladder meridian affected by the outstretched leg.

Lateral Shoelace Pose

The Practice

- Sit with your right leg over your left, your knees stacked, and put your weight on our right sitting bone.
- Allow your left hand to move out to the side, along the floor, in line with your left hip.
- If your right sitting bone stays on the floor and your hand is far out to the side, rest your forearm on the floor and drop your head to the left.
- Hold 2-3 minutes, return to centre, and repeat on the other leg.

Benefits

- It is a strong hip opener.
- Opens your heart, sacral and grounding energy centres in your body for balance and healing.

Knees-into-the-Chest Pose

The Practice

- Lie on your back.
- Bring both knees into your chest, and interlace your fingers around your shins.
- Keep your sacrum, shoulders, and chin down.
- Stay in this pose as needed.

Benefits

- Stretches and stabilizes the pelvis and low back and can reduce lower back pain.
- Reduces excessive anger, excitement, anxiety and high blood pressure.
- Helps with muscle guarding, hyper lordosis, sciatic nerve impingement, muscle spasm,spinal stenosis, and disc herniation

Legs-Up-against-the-Wall Pose

(Also known as Viparita Karani in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- Sit straight with your right hip touching a wall and your legs straight out in front of you.
- As you lie back, swivel around and slide your legs up the wall; this should allow you to position yourself right up with your buttocks against the wall when you are lying flat.
- Keep your sacrum weighted toward the floor, and rest your head back so that your chin is at about the same height as your forehead.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, bend the knees and either push with your feet away from the wall or twist to the side and use your hands to sit up.

Variation

- If it feels higher, place a folded blanket under your head only.
- If your legs feel like they will bend easily and cause your feet to slide down the wall, wrap a strap around your thighs just above your knees.

Benefits

- Causes the typical downward pull of chi (which often pools and stagnates in your legs) to be reversed, refreshing the circulation throughout your lower body meridians.
- Stimulates the Bladder meridian.
- If you put your legs up the wall with your pelvis elevated on a folded blanket, lymph and other fluids that can lead to swollen ankles, tired knees, and congested pelvic organs flow into the lower belly; this refreshes the legs and the reproductive area.

- Gives blood circulation a gentle boost toward the upper body and head, which creates a pleasant rebalancing after you have been standing or sitting for a long time.
- If you are stressed, fatigued, or jet-lagged, this pose is especially refreshing.
- Teaches us that positive results can come from doing less, not more.

Quarter-Dog Pose

The Practice

- Begin on all fours, in Table Top, or Child's Pose.
- Place your left forearm perpendicular to the upper arm and extend your right arm out, resting your elbow on the floor.
- Keep your hips back above your knees, which should be hip-width apart.
- Rest your head on the floor in front of your elbow or directly on the forearm.
- Allow your back to arch and your belly and underarms to drape toward the floor.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale as you come back up to all fours. You can take a few breaths, rounding your spine, before changing sides.
- Rest in Child's Pose when you have completed both sides.

Use of Props

- If you have sensitivity in your shoulders, place a cushion under your head to keep them higher.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Lung and Heart meridians as gentle pressure is placed across the shoulder joint and upper arms.
- Compression along the spine stimulates the Urinary Bladder lines.
- If you feel the stretch in the chest, then your Stomach and Spleen lines are stimulated.
- Opens the chest for better breathing.
- It is a nice backbend for the upper and middle back.
- Also opens the shoulders.

Contraindications

- If you have neck issues, this could strain it.
- Be aware of any tingling in the hands or fingers. This is often a sign that a nerve is being compressed, and if we continue to compress it, we may permanently damage it. If you feel tingling, adjust the arm and hand positions, or skip the pose entirely.

Seated Twist Pose

(Also known as one of the variations of Ardha Matsyendrasana in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you.
- Bend your knees, put your feet on the floor, and slide your left foot under your right leg to the outside of your right hip.
- Lay the outside of the left leg on the floor. Step the right foot over the left leg and stand it on the floor outside your left hip. The right knee will point directly up at the ceiling.
- Bring your left hand or elbow around your right knee and rest your left hand on your left foot.
- Your right hand can be used as a prop on the floor behind you or placed on your inner left thigh.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, exhale and release your left arm, stretching both legs in front of you. Repeat on the other side.

Variations and Use of Props

- If the position of the legs feels awkward or risky for your left knee, extend your left leg out straight (the one which is folded on the floor).

- You can also try different placements for your left hand, such as on your right thigh, or wrapped under your right knee, interlacing your fingers together.

Benefits

- Affects the Gallbladder and the Liver meridians.
- Stretches the shoulders, hips, IT band, and neck.
- Energizes the spine.
- Stimulates the digestive fire in the belly.
- Relieves menstrual discomfort, fatigue, sciatica, and backache.

Sleeping Swan Pose

(Also known as Eka Pada Rajakapotasana, Pigeon Pose in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- You can come into this pose either from Down Dog (which is more advanced) or from Table Top pose.
- Bring your right knee forward and place your shin and knee on the floor in front of and to the right ofyour right hip.
- If possible, bend forward, place your forearmson the floor, and rest your head on your forearms.
- Hold the pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, inhale up onto your hands. Exhale and draw your right foot behind your thigh. Repeat on the other side.

Use of Props

- If your thigh does not rest on the floor or you have a sensitive knee, place a folded blanket or pillow under your hip.

- You can rest your weight up on your hands for all or part of the time to prevent any stress to your knee.

- If you still feel this pose is potentially risky to your front knee, then avoid it altogether and take Eye-of-the-Needle Pose instead.

Benefits

- Affects the Gallbladder meridian, and places pressure on the groin to nourish the Liver meridian.
- It is a vigorous way to open the hips, allowing gravity to do the work.
- Provides a strong external rotation of front hip.
- Provides the quadriceps and hip flexors a nice stretch for the side that has the leg back.

Contraindications

- If you have bad knees (especially any problems with the inner meniscus), be aware of the pressure on the knees.
- If hips are too tight, that is where the pressure will go. If this happens, bring the front foot back, more toward or under that hip.

Snail Pose

(Also considered as one of the variations of Karnapida Asana, Knee-to-Ear Pose, Knee Pressure Pose in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

- Lie on your back with your hands beside you. Inhale and bend your knees, bringing them over your head toward the floor.
- Keep your weight in your upper back rather than near your neck.
- If your feet drop down the floor, lower your knees to the floor on either side of your head, grasping one wrist with the opposite hand on top of your calves. Allow your elbows to rest out to the side.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, place your hands on the floor, and exhale as you roll your back on the floor, using your abdominals to slow you down and avoiding pressure on your neck. Bend your knees and place your feet on the floor while lying flat, moving your head slowly side to side. Stay here for a few breaths.

Variations

- If your feet do not rest on the floor, place your hands under your lower back.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Lung, Heart, and Intestine meridians.
- Urinary Bladder lines are deeply stretched.
- It is one of the deepest releases of the whole spine.
- Relaxes the heart, brings more blood flow to the head, drains the lungs, and compresses the internal organs, giving them a great massage.

Contraindications

- This pose puts a lot of pressure on the neck; be cautious. Avoid if you have any neck problems.
- Not recommended for anyone with highblood pressure, upper bodyinfections, vertigo, glaucoma, or a cold; also, women during their menstrualcycle may find it better not to do this pose.
- If you have any lower back disorders which do not allow flexion of the spine, then do not attempt this posture.
- Do not do this posture if you have recently eaten or are pregnant.

Sphinx Pose

The Practice

- Lie on your belly. Push up to rest on your elbows, which should be shoulder-width apart and a bit forward of the shoulder line.
- Bring your pals together in front of you or cross your arms and let your hands rest on your elbows.
- Rest upright, without slumping into your shoulders or lifting up from them.
- You can allow your buttocks and legs to relax, and your belly and organs to drape toward the floor,as long as you feel no sharp or shooting pains.
- Stay in the pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, slowly move your elbows out to the sides and lower your upper body to the floor. Rest in this lying position for a minute or so.
- When it feels appropriate, move slowly to Child's Pose.

Variations and Use of Props

- You can move your elbows farther forward so your ribs also carry some of your weight, and engage your inner thighs.

- If you would like to intensify this backbend a bit, place a cushion under your elbows.

Benefits

- Stimulates the Kidney meridian - organ, and kidney chi, revitalizing your energy supply.
- Allows a moderate compression of the lower spine, and a mild compression of the rectus abdominis.
- Strengthens the spine.
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen.
- Firms the buttocks.
- Stimulates abdominal organs.
- Helps relieve stress.

Contraindications

- If you have sensitivity/injury on your back or tight sacrum.
- If there are any sharp pains here, it's better to come out.
- Avoid pressing the belly into the floor if you're pregnant (use bolsters under the pelvis and the forearms).
- Avoid if you have a headache.

Square Pose

The Practice

- Sit cross-legged and bring your right foot on top of your left knee, your left foot under your right knee, your shins one on top of the other. When you look down, you should see a triangle shape between your legs.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, bring your spine upright and while leaning back, stretch out your legs, resting back on your hands before repeating the same pose on the other side.

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Variations and Use of Props

- If your right knee is not resting on your left foot, place a blanket under your right thigh and under your sitting bones.

- If you feel too much pressure on your left knee, place your right foot on the outside of the knee on the floor in a simple seated cross-legged pose.

- If seated forward bends do not aggravate your lower back, lean your weight forward at the hips and place your forearms on your shins or your forearms on the floor in front of your shins.

Benefits

- Affects the Liver and Kidney meridians, because these lines come through the inner groin; Gall Bladder line on outer leg; Urinary Bladder line if folding forward.
- It is a deep opening of the hips through strong external rotation.
- Decompresses the lower back when folding forward.

Contraindications

- Be aware of the pressureon the knees; if the hips are too tight, the pressure will go there.
- This pose can aggravate sciatica. If you have sciatica, elevate the hips by sitting on a cushion, until the knees are below the hips, or avoid this pose entirely. Beware of hips rotating backward while seated; we want them to rotate forward.
- If you have any lower back disorders which do not allow flexion of the spine, then do not allow the spine to round; keep the back as straight as you can.

Stirrup Pose (Happy Baby)

(Also known as Ananda Balasana in other Yang Styles of Yoga)

The Practice

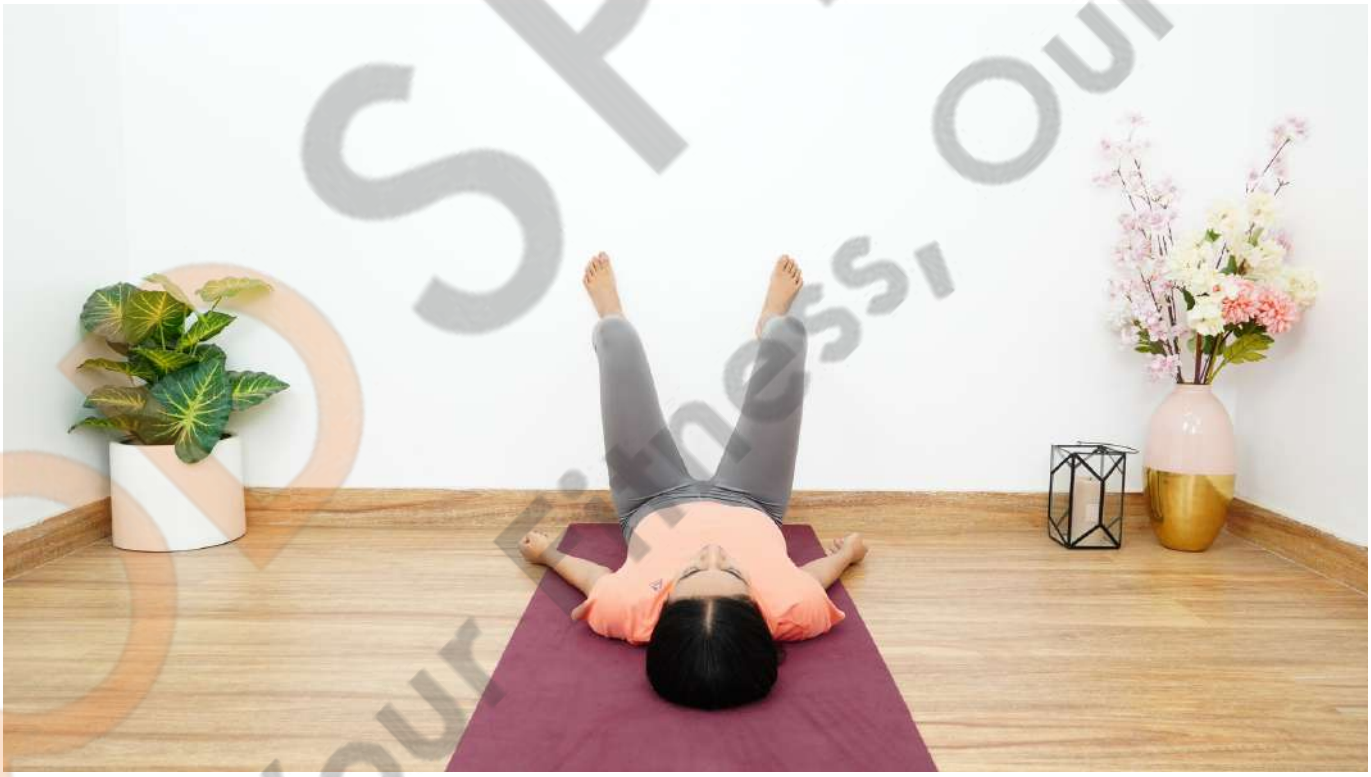
- Lie on your back, bend your knees toward your chest, and reach your hands along your inner thighs to your feet.
- Place your hands on your inner arches and draw your feet out so they are positioned over your knees.
- Keep your chin in line with your forehead (if the head raises, place a cushion under it), your shoulders weighted toward the floor, and your sacrum down.
- Stay in this pose for 3-5 minutes.
- To come out, release your feet and draw your knees into your chest and clasp your hands over your lower legs for a few breaths or minutes.

Variations

- If you cannot hold your feet easily, place a strap around each foot and hold the ends of each strap in the corresponding hand.

- If you find the sensations in your groin or legs too intense, simply bring your feet down closer to your buttocks.

- You can also practice this pose against a wall. Sit next to a wall with your right hip touching it. As you lie back, swivel around and take your feet up the wall; this should allow you to position your buttocks right up against the wall when you are lying flat with your legs above you. Bend your knees and plant your feet against the wall as low and wide as you can, as if you are squatting. To come out, walk your feet back up the wall until the knees are straight. Rest here a few moments before bending the knees and rolling to the side, using your hands to sit up.



Benefits

- Stimulates the Kidney meridian, as well as the Liver and Spleen meridians.
- It is a deep hip opener and one that can use arm strength, rather than letting gravity do the work.
- If you do pull with the arms, the arm flexion strengthens the biceps.
- Releases and decompresses the sacroiliac (SI) joints.
- Can be a compression of stomach organs.

Contraindications

- This can become a mild inversion; a student may want to avoid this posture if she is in her moon cycle, or if she/he has very high blood pressure.

Sequencing Yin Yoga Classes

With so few poses per class (in Yin less quantity and more time tends to be better!), sequencing can be challenging, especially for the new Yin teachers. Each asana we teach should have a specific purpose. Understanding the target area(s) and the benefits (physically, emotionally, mentally) of each posture will help you to outline this purpose.

A useful way to start creating your Yin Yoga flows is organizing the asanas around a common thread:

- By target area
- By meridian
- By chakra

As you develop your own sequences of poses, keep in mind these guiding principles:

- Every yoga pose is good/bad for somebody. Everyone's anatomy and history are unique, and this means that each pose affects each person differently. Be aware and respectful of your and your students' differences, and modify your classes accordingly.

- Do not become fixated on "mastering a pose". The poses are meant to be therapeutic, not to challenge anybody's pride. As teachers, we must encourage our students to embrace uncomfortable poses aiming healthy results, but avoid poses that might be bad for them.
- Forward bends are Yin. They bring the head level with the heart making it easy to pump blood to the brain. Forward bends harmonize chi flow along the meridians near the spine, which is calming and sedating.
- Back bends are yang. They stimulate the nerves and provide energy. Backward bend does not need to be held as long as forward bends. Experiment with more backbends for shorter periods of time rather than longer holds.
- Time of day and season are important. A more yang practice with shorter holds might be desirable on a cold day. A more yin practice might be appropriate on a warm day. However, it will depend upon your body type.
- In a yin class, less variety is needed and the emphasis can be placed on just a few poses.
- It is fine to practice yang exercise before yin, or yin exercise before yang. Just allow adequate adjustment time when going from one to the other.

- Encourage your students to modify the pose as much as needed if they find the posture too stressful. Remind them that the hands and feet will restrict them or help them to stress the target area; therefore, they can modify their placement in order to get the benefits of the pose. Yin yoga should never be a strain.

Organizing the Postures

- In Yin yoga we don't need/want to warm up the body, but we still want to have a period at the beginning of the practice when we ease into the body.

Beginning asanas

There are a few excellent beginning postures that we can use to help us open the body gently:

- Butterfly: loosens up the spine for deeper forward bends
- Child's Pose: grounding and soothing
- Caterpillar: loosens up the spine for deeper forward bends
- Sphinx: loosens up the spine for deeper back bends

Counter poses

In Yin Yoga style, counterposes are recommended; however, they do not need to occur right away. Also, it can be nice to do some gentle yang movements between postures to relieve any incipient stagnation andget the energy flowing again. Counter poses are very logical. Back bends balance forward bends and vice versa. Right balances left. Internal rotation of the hips balances external rotation. Twists can be used to balance almost any pose involving the spine. By the time you finished your class, make sure you have done counterpoises for all the deep postures you've offered.

Linking asanas

Many asanas seem to go perfectly with other asanas; Shoelace seems to flow naturally into the Swan. Twists easily flow from one side to the other. Some yang poses seem to be made for when we come out of yin poses: Down Dog feels so good after the Swan or the Dragons. Shallow postures organically precede deeper postures. For example, if you want to stimulate the kidneys, you may wish to start with Saddle Pose. After, try Sphinx for a few minutes. Then move into Seal; and finish this sequence with Child's Pose as counter pose.

Rebound

Remember to allow your students to feel the energy moving around the target area. To come out of a pose, invite them to move as minimum as possible and stay in stillness to observe the movement of energy.

Finishing Asanas

In Yin practice, since we never warmed the body up, we don't need to cool it down, but we still want to find a way back to neutrality, to balance. Any of the beginning asanas could work well at the end of a class, but the pose most often done is the reclining twist. This asana allows the body to fully relax and release. It is one of the most yin-like asanas of all. Twisting the spine is not the only way to end your class; but it does restore equilibrium to the nervous system and gets a lot of the residual kinks out of the system.
Once we have completed the last pose, it is time for rest, and then a transition back to the world. The rest period is called Savasana. Don't skip it.

Balancing Energy

When we have finished our practice, we should feel completely balanced. After Savasana, or even just before it, some quiet pranayama or energy work is often offered. Performing some guided breath work can help you and your students to balance the yin and yang energies, and wake up again.

Ending Meditation

After relaxing and balancing the energy, you may wish to conclude your class with a brief meditation. This can mirror your opening meditation; you may wish to remind your students of their intention for the practice and/or conduct an inner inventory once more.

General Sequencing Tips

Sequencing is a very personal art, but there are some recommendations that can be useful:

- Write down your sequence.
- Practice your sequence before you teach it.
- Never skip Savasana!
- Alternate the sequences according to the focus you want to offer. Find below some examples:

1. Pranayama, meditation, Kidneys sequence (to overcome apprehension, confusion, or fear, and to increase the energy) with Liver sequence
2. Sun Salutations, yin sequence,Savasana (to compensate long hours of sitting or low activity)
3. Kidneys sequence, Yang Core sequence, Savasana
4. Liver sequence (to alleviate agitation, irritation, or restlessness. Great as hip opener, and support digestion)
5. Meditation, Yin sequence, Yang practice
6. Stomach/Spleen sequence, Sun Salutations, Savasana, pranayama and meditation
7. Liver sequence, pranayama, meditation

Samples of Yin Yoga Flows

While you develop your sequencing skills, We offer you a few flows you can use as samples for your classes. Please note that these classes are just a small sampling of what is possible to create with the existing dozens of Yin yoga asanas.

Beginners' Flow (60 min)

Hold each posture for 3 minutes. Relax the body in any way that feels comfortable for 30-60 seconds between asanas.

- Opening Meditation
- Butterfly
- Dragonfly (fold over right leg)
- Dragonfly (fold over left let)
- Dragonfly (fold down the middle)
- Sphinx
- Child's Pose
- Seal
- Child's Pose
- Half Shoelace (with right leg forward)
- Half Shoelace (with leftleg forward)
- Stirrup Pose
- Reclining twist (on right side)
- Reclining twist (on left side)
- Savasana
- Finishing Meditation

Flow for the Spine (75 minutes)

- Opening meditation
- Dragonfly (fold over right leg for 5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Dragonfly (fold over left leg for 5minutes)
- Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Dragonfly (fold through the centre for 5 minutes)
- Sleeping Swan (1 minute each side)
- Caterpillar (5 minutes)
- Tabletop
- Sphinx (5 minutes)
- Rest on the stomach or in Child's Pose for one minute
- Seal (5 minutes)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Knees-into-the-Chest Pose (1 minute)
- Seated Twist Pose (1 minute each side)
- Stirrup Pose (2 minutes)
- Knees-into-the-Chest Pose (1 minute)
- Snail (3-5 minutes)
- Fish Pose (1 minute)
- Reclining Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Lying Spinal Twist Pose (on bothsides)
- Savasana
- Finishing Meditation

Flow for the Hips (90 minutes)

- Opening Meditation
- Wide-Knee Child's Pose (3 minutes)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Shoelace with right knee on top (5 minutes)
- Swan with right leg back (1 minute)
- Sleeping Swan (4 minutes)
- Square with right leg on top of left leg (5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers or Table Top (1 minute)
- Shoelace with left knee on top (5 minutes)
- Swan with left leg back (1 minute)
- Sleeping Swan (4 minutes)
- Square with left leg on top of right leg (5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers or Table Top (1 minute)
- Sphinx (5 minutes, with option to combine with Seal)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Saddle (5 minutes)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Dragon with right leg forward (4 minutes)
- Down Dog (1 minute)
- Dragon with left leg forward (4 minutes)
- Down Dog (1 minute)
- Lying Twist on right side (3 minutes)
- Lying Twist on left side (3 minutes)
- Savasana
- Finishing Meditation

Flow for the Kidneys (90 minutes)

- Opening Meditation
- Butterfly (5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Dragonfly folding over right leg (5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Dragonfly folding over left leg (5 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers (1 minute)
- Dragonfly folding through the centre (5 minutes)
- Table Top (1 minute)
- Seal (or Sphinx) (5 minutes)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Saddle (5 minutes)
- Child's Pose (1 minute)
- Dragon with right leg forward (3 minutes)
- Down Dog (1 minute)
- Child's Pose (a few breaths)
- Dragon with left leg forward (3 minutes)
- Down Dog (1 minute)
- Child's Pose (a few breaths)
- Caterpillar (5 minutes)
- Knees-to-the-Chest (1 minute)
- Stirrup (3 minutes)
- Windshield Wipers lying down (1 minute)

- Lying Spinal Twist on right side (3 minutes)
- Lying Spinal Twist on left side (3 minutes)
- Savasana
- Finishing Meditation

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How to Teach Yin Yoga Classes

Once we have reviewed some principles of sequencing to create Yin Yoga classes, let's learn now a few guidelines about how to teach those classes.

Cultivate the Practice of Mindfulness

In order to begin a Yin Yoga class, it's important to start training our ability of being conscious and aware (mindfulness). To do so, you need to be aware of three distinct behaviours:

1. Arriving and Centering. Arriving into a seated mindfulness practice involves body awareness. It is recommended to choose any of the following poses that feel comfortable for at least 10 minutes.

Burmese Pose

- Your feet are placed in front of each other in front of the pelvis; your knees are spread wide and resting down on the floor.
- Have a cushion or pillow under your sitting bones to maintain a slight tilt forward in the pelvis.

Variations

- You may rest one or both knees on an extra cushion or blanket to help relax your groin muscles and stabilize your knees.
- Another version of this pose is called Easy Pose, in which you place each foot under the opposite knee.

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Thunderbolt/ Adamantine/ Antler Pose

- If you have tight outer hips or sciatica, you may want to choose this pose rather than one of the cross-legged poses. Sit with your feet pointing back and your buttocks on a cushion or over the heels.

Half Lotus Pose

- If you have more external range of motion in your outer hips, you can place one foot on top of the opposite thigh, and take this pose.
- The sole of your bottom foot rests against the inside of the opposite thigh with your heel near your perineum.

Lotus Pose

- If you have very open hips, you can rest each foot on the opposite thigh.

Once you are situated and aligned, you can centre. Begin by committing to stay still (unless to do so feels risky to any of your joints). Centering help us to remember the value of what we are doing now. Set an intention for your practice, and come back to this intention at the first signs of difficulty or doubt.

2) Anchoring and Labelling: Now it's time to anchor on the breath and then open into a broader awareness that includes sensations, emotions, and mind states. Focused, one- pointed attention is a foundation practice in many styles of meditations. The purpose of this initial exclusive focus is to settle down and in, breeding a concentrated state of mind that is both relaxed and alert. You can anchor to the breath by:

- **Simply watching each breath cycle:** Whether the breath is long or short, deep or shallow, listen to each with interest as if it is the only one you will ever take.

Once you have practice, it's probable that your attention will want to wander off. No need to despair, as this is to be expected. Rather than berate yourself, mindfulness training expands on breath awareness and begins to allow any "distraction" to be knows directly as it is.

During such practice, you simply track and label the changing features, coming back to the breath as soon as you note whatever else has arisen. Throbbing, pinching, tickling, sweating, and shivering are common for sensations; uneasy, disappointed, joyous, and resentful might illustrate emotions; and waiting, judging, planning, and dreading are descriptions of mind states.

Remember, you don't have to look for an experience. Going with the flow with a detached mindset is the right way.

3) Accepting and Letting Go: While you practice mindfulness, you temporarily suspend your tendency to edit or censure what is happening. Allow each feature to come and go within the field of your attention. As you embrace an atmosphere of allowance, you also let go of your habitual assumptions about what you think should be happening in contrast to what actually is.

Teaching the Postures

Once your students have spent about 10 minutes in the initial phase of the class, you can start offering the postures of your sequence.

- Always mention the target area. Why are we doing this pose?
- Suggest at least two variations of the pose. Offer these variations from the beginning, so students know they have options.
- Have a dialogue with your students: Usually in yoga classes the teacher uses one-way communication: instructing, guiding, counting, suggesting; but rarely opens up to dialogue. In a functional approach you, as teacher, has no way to know if the student is targeting the area of the pose, unless you ask. For this reason, don't be afraid to offer the pose -or its modifications- and ask for feedback: How does it feel in the target area? Which option feels more effective for you?
- Point out where they shouldn't feel the pose, and ask them not to tolerate any pain anywhere, or discomfort in an area that is not the target one.

- Use a timer: You are responsible for keeping your students in the recommended time for each posture, and also to allow them to practice the pose in each side during the same amount of time. Be mindful to use a quite timer so you don't disturb them with any loud sound. If you are using the timer of your phone, make sure it is in airplane mode, and don't get distracted with it.
- Don't practice while you teach: You can be on your mat and demo how to get into the pose, but once you have offered the posture and its modifications, step out of the mat. Remember that your energy, as the teacher, should be different than your students' energy; you need to be present for them, be aware of the time, follow the sequence, among other details around the class. Also, it's not healthy for you and your joints to be holding a Yin yoga pose and suddenly stand up to support a student that needs you; you can end up hurting yourself.
- Tone of voice: In a Yin Yoga class, you need to be aware of the tone and the volume of your voice. We want to be loud enough for everyone to hear but not so much that people get startled. The tone has to be soft, pace and gentle without being monotonous and boring.
- Handling silence. This is a key element when teaching a Yin Yoga class. There will be many spaces of silence, we want to have many spaces of silence! Yin is about introspective. Don't be afraid of not talking.

Of course, you want to provide cues, instructions and information, but you don't have to fill every single moment of the class with words. Find the balance between offering enough information and acknowledging the silence of the Yin Yoga practice.

- Walk around: This will allow you to hold the space for all of your students and also be aware is someone calls you or needs you.
- Don't use music: Ancient yogis never imagined that today we will be practicing yoga with the rhythm of music, even worse when it comes down to commercial music. Same as the talking, filling the space with music takes away the opportunity of introspection and mindfulness
- Allow students to have their own experience: As teachers, we may act as instruments for our students. We offer them guidance, propose options and teach them about sensations and forms, but we are not in the class to impose anything to anyone. People have different reasons to practice yoga and maybe some of those reasons are not the same intentions we planned for our class. And it's fine. Allow everyone to be comfortable in their mat, experiencing what they want or need to experience in that moment. Be there to support and guide, to accompany and help, but respect their personalities, goals and particular ways to do their practice.

- Emotional releases in Yin Yoga classes. Remember that yin poses work with deeper layers of ourselves, and not only the deeper layers of the physical body. Once we have crossed the line of muscles, tendons and joints, the asanas get into the energetic and emotional layers. Create a space where your students feel safe and allow them to explore any emotion that may arise in the class. But remember, you are not a therapist or counsellor, and a yoga class is not group therapy, so don't feel obliged to have the right words, or to do anything. Just create the space for them to feel comfortable and safe. Don't try to "fix" anything, just be there for them.

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