

Introduction to Yin Yoga

YIN & YANG



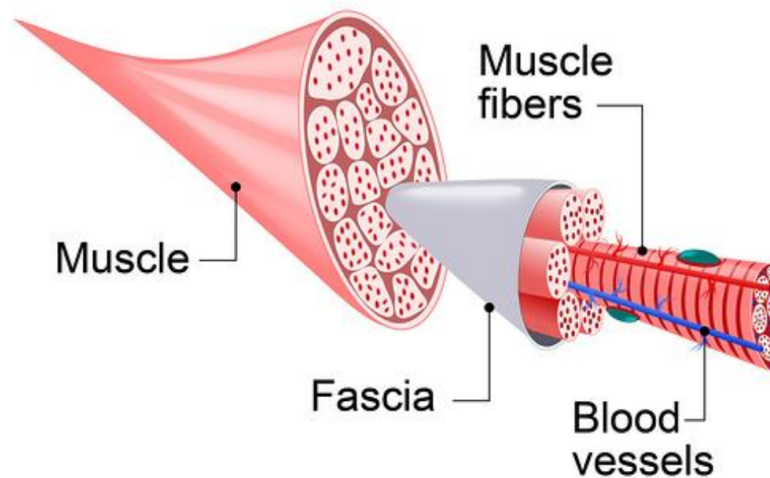
First to understand Yin, we must understand Yang – and vice versa. Yang is dynamic, energetic, vibrant and active. Yin is yielding, passive, cool and dark. Yang Yoga (Hatha, Vinyasa) is designed to activate the yang tissues – muscles, blood and skin. Yin yoga allows us to work with the Yin tissues – ligaments, joints, fascia and bones. Our muscles are elastic, but the fascia that covers the muscles, like a layer of saran wrap over every muscle, can be thought of more like plastic – it can be mouldable when warm. The fascia that covers the muscles is a harder tissue, and our muscles can only move with as much flexibility as the fascia that covers it allows. These harder tissues require more pressure and time to open up in order to allow for true flexibility.

Because the deep tissues are targeted to be opened, worked with and stressed, it is important to differentiate between Restorative Yoga and Yin Yoga. Restorative Yoga is extremely gentle and has the main goal to *restore* tissue, holding poses for a long time with cushions, bolsters and other supports to allow the body to sink into healing positions without pressure or tension. Yin Yoga can be very intense and with a lot of pressure for a relatively long period of time. Its main goal is to *open joints, stress harder tissue and release emotion*. There needs to be great care in working with injuries with Yin Yoga, so as to not overstretch an injured tissue, or to cause new injury. It is best to give each pose 70% - that is, to find your edge (the point where your tissues naturally feel a resistance), and then only slowly sink more deeply into the pose with time. This allows the tissues to gradually open on their own, giving you the chance to gently seek deeper into the pose with each passing minute.

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YIN	YANG
Moon	Sun
Water	Fire
Cold	Hot
Cool	Warm
Dark	Vibrant
Feminine	Masculine
Passive	Dynamic
Fascia Tissue	Muscle Tissue



WHY DO WE WANT TO RELEASE THE FASCIA?

- Opens the feeling of tightness in the body – increases flexibility
- Opens our energetic pathways
- Opens our emotional pathways

Our body grows a new layer of Fascia every single night!

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THE HISTORY OF YIN YOGA

Yin Yoga is a combination of traditional Indian Yoga and Chinese Daoist teachings, among other things. Starting with the Daoist lineage of Cho Chat Ling, who passed his teachings onto Paulie Zink in the USA, Paul Grilley took Daoist Yoga classes from Paulie Zink in 1987. These classes offered long-held poses to increase flexibility for Monkey Kung Fu, as well as teaching about Daoist Alchemy and included Yoga poses and movements that represented the 5 elements (Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, Wood) and animals like the monkey itself. Paul Grilley was an academic student of anatomy and a yoga teacher as well. He also studied

Traditional Chinese Medicine and Shinto shamanism under Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama in Japan, who had been able to scientifically prove the movements of subtle energies in the body via the Meridian Lines (pathways of energy). Paul Grilley took the teachings of Paulie Zink's Daoist Yoga, along with precise anatomical knowledge, Ashtanga and other Yang Yoga practices, and an understanding of the movement of energy and emotion within the physical body and created what we know as Yin Yoga in the early 2000's. One of the greatest contributions that Paul Grilley has made to the Yoga community, besides Yin Yoga itself, is the teaching that not everyone has the same bones. In fact, everyone has a slight or even significant difference in the length and width of their bones and of the shape and direction of the joints. This means that not everyone is able to comfortably or safely form the strict and rigid postures that most Yang Yoga forms are famous for. Yin offers us the idea that, "if you're feeling it, you're doing it," and allows different people to form a pose differently, adjusting for your body and bones, so long as you are feeling the sensation of good stress and opening along the targeted area of the body.

SO, WHAT IS YIN YOGA?

"Yang exercise targets the yang tissues: the muscles. Any static holds are brief. The muscles are elastic and can take this type of exercise. However, to apply yang exercise to yin tissues could damage them. Yin tissues, being more plastic, require gentler but longer-held stresses." – p. 8 *The Complete Guide to Yin Yoga*

Stress – the tension placed upon our tissues

Stretch – the elongation that results from that stress

You apply a *stress* to your muscles that results in a *stretch*.

In general, in Yin Yoga we are aiming to *stress* the yin tissues (ligaments, joints, fascia).

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Postures –

- Generally held 3 – 5 minutes – you will see in the Asana section of your Yin Book that some can be held longer while others *must* be shorter.
- Many poses are adapted from Yang Yoga (Hatha), but are given new names (in English!) to reflect the *different approach* that is taken to these poses – passive holds (tight muscles protect the joints, relaxed muscles exercise them as is the intention with Yin), in stillness, for an extended period of time.

How to take the Postures - Finding your Edge

“The first principle of Yin Yoga: every time you come into a pose, go only to the point where you feel a significant resistance in the body. **Don’t try to go as deeply as possible right away.**” – ch. 2

This point, your EDGE will *usually* be at about 70% of your full capacity.

Allow yourself to be here, feel here, and slowly sink deeper over time *if it feels right*.

THE ESSENSE OF YIN IS YEILDING.

DISCOMFORT vs. PAIN

Pain is:

- Sharp
- Fiery
- Electric
- Stabbing
- Tingling

Discomfort is:

- Dull
- Achy
- Can be breathed into

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Knowing and understanding that there is a difference between Pain and Discomfort, and being able to explain this to your students is a **KEY** for teaching Yin safely and effectively. If you experience *PAIN* – softly bring yourself out of the pose and take a gentle counterpose. If you experience *DISCOMFORT* – you’ve found your *EDGE*... sit with it and breathe into that space.

Not everyone will look the same in a Yin class. One student may be doing Swan pose while another is holding Shoelace *but they may be achieving the same intention of the class!*

If you are feeling it you are doing it!

This will make even more sense once we talk about Meridian Lines in Yin Yoga.

A Teacher’s Technical Understanding: A practice of Yoga where postures are held passively and at 70% capacity for 3 – 5 minutes (sometimes for less time, sometimes for more), with the intention to stress Yin Tissues in the body, open energetic pathways and to bring practitioners back to the Dao, to a state of balance between their Yin and Yang energetic, physical and emotional aspects of being.