

Anatomy and Physiology for Yin Yoga

Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology for Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga was only introduced to the Western world about fifty years ago but it has roots in the oldest form of yoga known to man. Learning Yoga Asana and practicing these will ensure you are more in touch with your inner self and the world that surrounds you. Yoga also improves fitness, core strength, flexibility and ability to respond to stress. Some other health benefits



include an increased resilience towards diseases and conditions often associated with aging. Yin Yoga delves into the softer exercises and encourages the practicing of this by itself. It is a relaxed, slow exercise, which allows your mind and soul a chance to find themselves and assimilate into the world that surrounds us. It'll allow you to know 'you' to your deepest Self and will aid in guiding you through all the challenges and journeys of life.

Once you achieve this level of connection with your inner Self, you will be surprised at how easily everything else falls into place. Yin Yoga is a lifestyle and provides the opportunity to better see yourself and the world through fresh perspectives. In My Health Yoga we propose that there is not one size of Yoga that fits all, as it is a personal choice regarding which styles of yoga blend best to suit you, your lifestyle and your needs. There are also no absolute rules in Yin or Yang yoga. It is up to you to find and to develop the best practice that suits your own needs.

Best time to practice Yin Yoga

In Yoga and Universal causality, there are rarely any absolutes. The question of when to practice Yin Yoga has no simple answer, and as stated before, no routines or regimes will be

suitable for everyone. You should exercise trial and error and get to know yourself better to find the best routine for you. However, in an attempt to simplify this exercise, the following are a few suggestions about when to practice Yin Yoga:

- When our muscles are cool so they don't steal the stress away from the deeper tissues e.g. early in the morning.
- Later in the evening before bed to calm the mind before sleep.
- Before an active Yang practice, before the muscles become too warmed up.
- When life has become very busy, to balance the yang energies in our environment.
- After a long trip as traveling is very yang, even if we are sitting down most of the time.
- During a woman's menstrual cycle, to preserve energy.
- During injury-recovery or time of illness.

How deep should we go in a posture?

Considering that we are all different, there is no set rule for everyone. However, we should work within the limits of the tissues activated so as not to move into the injury realm. When we exercise, we stress our tissues to make them weaker 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, we are risk of injuring ourselves.

How long should Yin postures be held?

Yoga in general promotes the awareness, discerning and release of Ego inputs, not only in your Yoga practice, but also in your daily life. Yin Yoga encourages letting go of comparing ourselves to others, as this will often lead to injury. Once we are able to accept that we are all different, in different journeys and stages, and have been blessed with unique traits and qualities, we understand that we shouldn't do someone else's practice. This includes your teacher's practice or the person next to you who may seem proficient in Yoga Asana. In other words, what might work for a friend could be dangerous for you. Allow yourself time to open up

and mould your body into a more Yin- like being. It may take you weeks, months or even years to reach your particular goals. If you are practicing on your own, the use of a stopwatch is recommended.

Traditionally Yin postures are held three to five minutes; however, if you are just beginning, you may want to start with one or two minute holds and work your way toward longer periods. You may find that some postures allow you to remain in the pose longer than others; this is ok. Reset the timer and stay longer. Our bodies are not uniformly open either. We may find that one side of our body is more flexible, strong or malleable than the other. This is normal. Ahimsa (do no harm) should always rule your practice, so remember- if you are struggling to remain in a pose, come out regardless of whether the timer has sounded or not. Listen to your body and your intuition and let go of Ego inputs to maximize the safety and efficacy of your Yin practice.

How many times per week should we practice Yin yoga?

In the yang world we are advised to rest our muscles for at least a day between workouts. The reason for this is to allow the muscles a chance to repair the microscopic damage that occurs during workouts and to allow the metabolic waste products to be removed. In our yin practice however, the muscles are quiet and we do not metabolize our fuels, so there are few or no waste products to get rid of. We do however, create microscopic damage to our connective tissues, and we do want time to allow this to heal and become stronger. However studies have shown that we do not have to wait days between practices to allow this healing to take place. A healthy and mindful practitioner could practice Yin Yoga every day. Remember: during busy periods of time, a short practice is still better than no practice at all. Our intuition and bodies will let us know when to rest and when to practice. Be mindful to find the right answers for you.

Effects of Yin Yoga in the mind

Yoga, in general, is designed to create harmony in the body and the mind. In its purest form it also seeks to join your consciousness with the universe. The intention is to become spiritually aware and gain a deeper understanding of the world around us, and how our interactions can change the lives of those we meet. For this reason, unsurprisingly, people who practice Yin yoga appear to have a better attention span and a higher level of concentration. This is a direct result of the improved ability to relax and focus on what is important.

There are three main aspects of the physiology of yoga and these hold true, regardless of whether you choose to practice Yin, Yang or both types of yoga:

- **Flexibility.** Yin Yoga focuses on the connective tissues in the body. These tissues are very strong and relatively rigid; they will not respond well to bursts of energy attempting to change them. The longer and more flexible these connecting tissues become, the better our ability will be to stretch. On the other hand, Yang yoga focuses on bursts of movement; these quick repetitive movements are perfect for building muscle tone. Conversely Yin yoga must apply slow, gentle pressure to the connecting tissues to allow them to slowly stretch. Attempting to stretch them by repetitive, quick movements, such as in Yang yoga, can cause injury.
- **Pranayama.** Breathing must go hand in hand with stretching. Activating muscles and connective tissue will require more oxygen in the blood. Our ability to stretch and open up is directly linked with our respiration and the amount of blood oxygen at any given time. Pranayama is also directly linked with our emotional state, levels of stress and pain thresholds. In Yang's explosive flows, muscles will require oxygenation in order to keep up and avoid exhaustion. In Yin we need oxygen to achieve a state of relaxation and nourishment for connective tissue. The more relaxed we can be in a Yin posture, the more effectively connective tissue will be targeted and the longer and safer we can be in a pose.
- **De-stress.** This is a very challenging practice for many Westerners but one of the most

important aspects of practicing Yin yoga. As we focus on our inner self and distance our mind from external world issues, we will be able to go into a deep, introspective state which will allow us to put many things into perspective. What appeared to be a disaster can be placed into context and a solution worked out. True relaxation of the body involves the use of meditation, which is something that the positions of Yin yoga are designed to encourage. Meditation simply allows you to focus your thoughts on yourself, your relation to the world around you and ultimately, a deeper understanding of yourself.

Muscle tissue is Yang

One of the basic characteristics of yang exercise is rhythmic movement. Yang forms of exercise, (running, weight lifting, and swimming, dancing, martial arts, gymnastics, etc.), alternately contract and relax the muscles. Muscle tissues respond very well to rhythmic yang exercise. Most popular forms of yoga (Ashtanga, Vinyasa or power yoga) are yang as they emphasize this rhythmic movement and muscular activation.

Muscles are bundles of filaments filled with fluids, particularly water. Muscles can be up to 90% water during intense exercise. The elasticity of muscle tissue varies dramatically with its fluid content. Most yoga students like to warm up by doing a series of muscular standing postures or inversions, because working the muscles fills them with blood and makes them more elastic. Exercising muscles also helps bones stay healthy because when muscles vigorously pull on bones the bones respond by becoming thicker and stronger. This is why vigorous, not gentle, exercise is prescribed to prevent osteoporosis.

Yang tissues do better when stressed in a yang manner and yin tissues do better when stressed in a yin way. Stress has many negative connotations in our culture because we forget to rest after it. But to have no, or little, stress in our life is just as damaging as having too much stress. We need to stress the body, and we need to rest it. There is a yin/yang balance here that leads to health. Too much of anything is not healthy.

TOO MUCH YIN



BALANCED

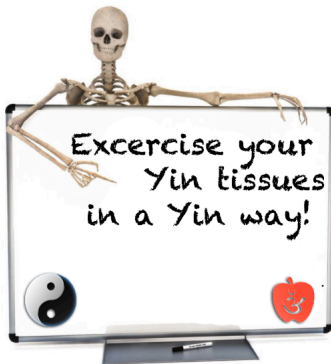


TOO MUCH YANG



Yang exercise targets the yang tissues: the muscles. Muscles thrive when rhythmically and repetitively moved. 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 long-held stresses. To rhythmically bend ligaments over and over again, as some students do when doing drop back from standing into the Wheel or moving from Up-dog to Down-dog, can, over time, damage the ligaments. The point here is do not apply yang exercise techniques to yin tissues.

Applying a yin exercise to yang tissues could also be damaging. Holding a muscle in a contracted state for a long period of time is called “tetany” and may damage it.



Connective tissue is Yin

Yin exercises create a gentle traction of the connective tissue. As important as it is for our physical and mental well-being to be strong, it is not muscular strength that gives us the feeling of ease and lightness in the body; it is the flexibility of the joints. It's interesting to point out that most professional athletes don't retire because of muscular problems; they retire because of joint problems. Bad ankles, bad backs, bad knees, etc., are the injuries that force athletes to retire and old people to live sedentary lives.

Yin yoga postures gently stretch and rehabilitate the connective tissues that form our joints. Most people accept the fact that muscle tissue shrinks or grows in response to exercise but imagine that the connective tissues of the body are inert and unchanging. This is largely untrue,

as all tissues of the body are changing and adapting to the stresses put upon them. If we never open our hips, bend our knees or stretch our spines, the connective tissue is going to shorten to the minimum length needed to accommodate our regular movements. Years of abuse and neglect such as living sedentary lives or exercises that lead to many injuries (both extremes of the excess-deficiency spectrum) will lead to contraction and stiffness because our joints will have been shrink-wrapped by the shortened connective tissue.

Yin Yoga is an invaluable true anti-aging tool. If we want to maintain our joints flexible, we must exercise them. **We should not exercise them like muscles; we must exercise them in a yin way.** Moderately stretching the joints does not injure them anymore than lifting weights injures the muscles. Both forms of exercise can be done carelessly, but neither is innately wrong or dangerous. Of course, if someone bounces into their joints they will hurt themselves sooner or later, but bouncing is a yang activity, and yin connective tissue shouldn't be trained that way.

Many health care professionals dismiss the idea of exercising joints as they have the mistaken view that all exercise is yang exercise. Despite this concern it is possible, and in fact necessary, to exercise ligaments, bones, and joints in a yin way. And remember the importance of resting our bodies after both a Yin or Yang session.

“Our teeth, for example, are anchored in bone and appear to be immobile. We know from experience, however, that they change. Still, no one would think it viable to “exercise the teeth” by grabbing hold of them and wiggling them back and forth as in yang activity. But with patient, methodical use of braces and retainers, even our teeth can be moved and realigned. Likewise the connective tissues that form our joints can be safely and desirably “exercised” by gently stretching them in yin yoga postures.” (Hiroshi Motoyama)

Yin Yoga at the quantum level



By now we hope to have conveyed the basic idea that connective tissues do not respond to rhythmic stresses the way muscles do. Connective tissues resist brief stresses but slowly change when a moderate stress is maintained for three-to-five minutes. However to further clarify what happens inside our bodies, we can observe natural phenomena. When we apply heat to a number of materials they become malleable. Even the hardest of materials such as metals, stones, diamonds, plastics, etc. can be softened or even liquefied under the right temperatures. Heat is a form of energy. When we add heat to something what we are doing at the atomic level is increasing its resonance. The atoms start vibrating and spinning at a higher speed and we feel this as heat. This vibration and spinning causes a state of fluidity and malleability in which materials can be bent and reshaped easily, as opposed to broken or cracked.

This is known as a “Phase change”. Within our bodies, holding a stress on connective tissue for several minutes creates a phase change in its fluids, which results in a lengthening of the tissue and a feeling of ease. This phase change also allows a greater movement of Chi/Prana and blood, which transfers heat and nutrients through the tissues, which is both pleasurable and promotes healing. Someone new to yoga will probably experience a phase change during a posture but the physical lengthening might not be very profound. In other words, they will experience a pleasant energetic release even if they do not sink much deeper into the pose. But with persistent practice the fibres of connective tissue will grow and realign to allow for a greater range of motion as well.

Yin Postures & Relaxation

To stress the connective tissue around a joint, the muscles must be relaxed. If the muscles are tense then the connective tissue doesn't take the stress. *"You can demonstrate this for yourself by gently pulling on the middle finger of your left hand. When the left hand is relaxed you can feel the connective tissue of the finger joint stretching at the joint nearest the palm. When the fingers of the left hand are tensed and extended you can feel the muscles resist the pull, but the connective tissue is not being stretched. The stretching of the knuckle may seem a trivial example but the same principle applies to the knees, hips, and spine: the muscles in these areas must be relaxed if the connective tissue is to be stressed when doing a pose. Note that it is not possible or even desirable for all the muscles of the body to be relaxed when doing yin poses, but the muscles in the target area must be relaxed. For example, in a forward bend you may want to gently pull with your arms or contract your abdomen to increase the stress along the spine. But the muscles along the spine must be relaxed or the connective tissue will not be stretched."* (Sarah Powers)



In conclusion, Yang styles of yoga generally target the muscles and employ rhythmic, repetitive movements to stress the fibres and cells of the muscles. Being elastic and moist, the muscles appreciate this form of exercise and respond well to it. Yin tissues, however, being drier and much less elastic, could be damaged if they were stressed in this way. Instead, our more plastic tissues appreciate and require gentler pressures, applied for longer periods of time, in order to be stimulated to grow stronger.

The Yin within Yang & the Yang within Yin



Remember the white and black dot within the yin and yang symbol? Within yang there is yin and vice versa, this also applies to our tissues. Consider the muscle, which we just described as a yang tissue.

Within our yin tissues, we also find yang elements. In our fascia and ligaments, which are predominantly yin-like, there are contracting fibres, just like within our muscles. We also find elastic fibres called *elastin* within our yin tissues. So there is yang within yin here too; our connective tissues can contract and shorten.

“Physiologically, through our yoga practice, we build stability and mobility. If we look at the arc of aging, which everyone follows albeit at faster or slower rates, we begin life completely yang-like: we have the ultimate mobility that we will ever have, but we have no stability. Newborn babies have to be handled carefully because they have no internal stability. Now we start to stiffen, to become more yin-like. We gain stability as we age. When we are youngsters, we don’t need to work on gaining more mobility because we are already so yang-like: we need to work on our muscles and gaining strength. This is a yang time of life so we need yang forms of exercise. Somewhere around our mid-twenties to mid-thirties we reach the optimal balance between yin and yang, between mobility and stability. But the arc of aging must be followed: we continue to become more yin-like as we age. As we get older, as we get more yin-like, we need a yin form of exercise to keep us mobile.” (Sarah Powers)

Tissues in the human body

Our physical bodies are made up of many types of tissues that respond differently to exercise. To fully understand the physiological benefits of Yin Yoga, we need to understand the nature of these 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:

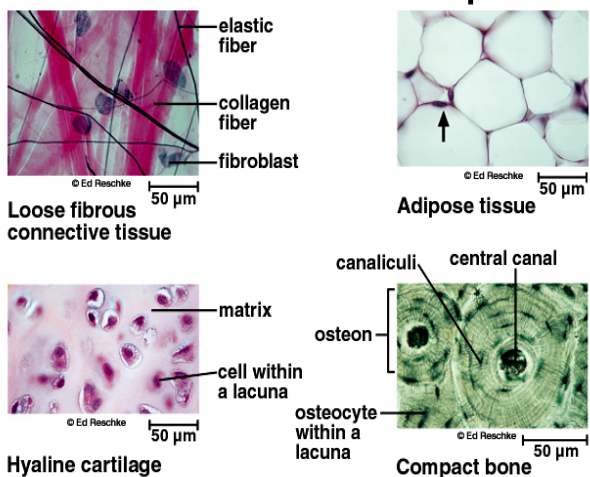
- Epithelia (skin, linings of our organs, etc.)
- Nervous
- Muscle
- Connective tissue

Yoga most directly affects these last two, although it actually affects the whole body and all of our tissues. Every time we move, we engage muscle to create the movement, and each movement stretches, twists, or compresses all the tissues in the area as well as areas farther away.

Connective Tissues

Our joint capsules and ligaments are part of a larger group of tissues known as connective tissues, a broad term that refers to biological tissues that bind, support, and protect other tissues. Connective tissue is extra-cellular, which means the tissues are not cells in themselves but are the materials surrounding and between cells. Connective tissue responds to stimuli, reacts to keep the body healthy, and creates and maintains the matrix of the body.

Connective tissue examples



There are many and various cells found inside the body. These include nerve cells, fat cells (adipose), blood cells (macrophages, plasma cells, mast cells, and lymphocytes), and blood vessels (capillaries). Weaving their way through all this are the fibres such as collagen and elastin, which connect the tissues. Our connective tissue is what gives us shape and helps to restrain our movements.

Bones are the most resistant to movement; cartilage is softer than bone and restrains our activities less. Ligaments, which bind bones together, also act to restrain movement depending upon their location or arrangement surrounding a joint.

In living bone there is a significant portion of both collagen and calcium salts. The mineral salts help us tolerate compression of the bone while the collagen helps us resist tension that would bend or break the bone. If the bone was made only of mineral salt and was subjected to extreme pressure, it would snap the way a dead tree branch breaks: cleanly. However, healthy, bone, with a high degree of collagen meshing, breaks more like a living branch of a tree. If you

have ever tried to snap off a living branch you know that it bends, crumpling one side while fraying the side away from the pressure.

Ligaments and Tendons

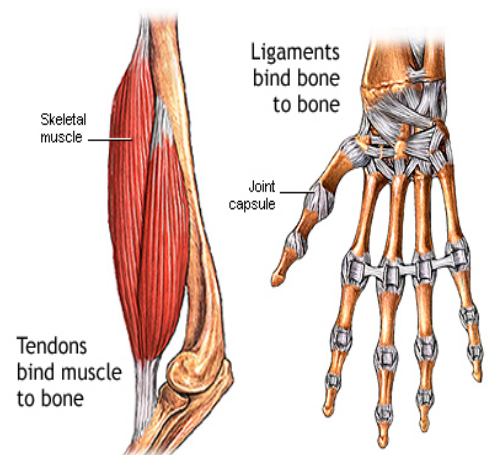


Ligaments are similar in construction to tendons but their function is to bind bones together (unlike tendons which bind muscle to bone), usually supporting a joint. Unlike tendons, ligaments come in a variety of shapes: cords, sheets, or bands. While tendons are generally white in appearance, ligaments can be darker due to their mixture of elastic and finer fibres. Ligaments can be pliable and flexible in the directions where they are not

binding the body. These qualities make ligaments ideal for protecting joints, which may move in a variety of ways. Ligaments are tough, strong, and pliable, yet mostly inelastic.

Yin Yoga & Joints

Our joints can be seen simply as spaces between the bones where movement is possible. Stabilizing the joint are ligaments, muscles, and tendons, which bind the bones together. Generally, one of the muscles' jobs is to protect the joint. If there is too much stress on the joint, the muscle will tear first, then the ligaments, and then finally the joint itself may become damaged. In this regard, yang yoga is designed to not stress the joint. This is why there is so much care taken to align the body and engage the muscles correctly before coming into asanas in the yang practice. However, Yin Yoga is specifically designed to exercise the ligaments and to regain space and strength in the joints.



Normally, joints allow movement of the body to occur and also provide support to the body.

Muscles attached to the bones via tendons provide the force or leverage to move one bone relative to another. Wrapping around the joint itself are ligaments that support and protect the joint. Inside the joints may be found synovial fluids or cartilage, or both, depending upon the type of joint and its function. Not all joints are meant to provide large ranges of motion. Some do not allow any movement at all. There are three basic kinds of joints:

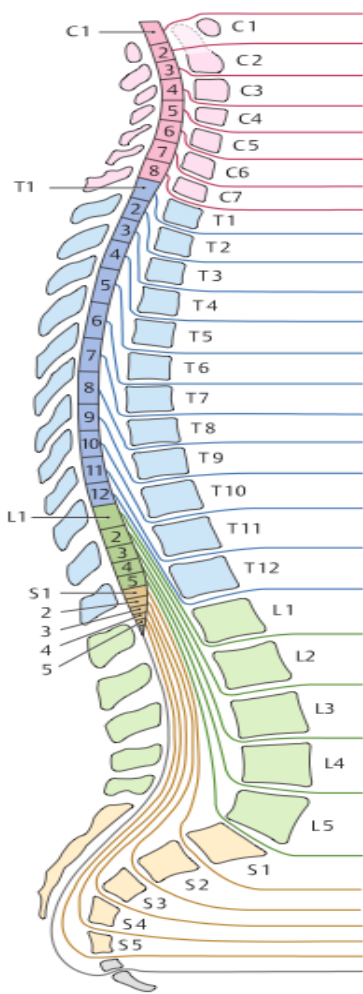
- Fibrous joints, where the bones are held together by connective tissues. An example of this kind of joint is the joining of the plates of our skull. No movement is desired here so the joints are fibrous, held tightly together.
- Cartilaginous joints, where the bones are held together by cartilage and allow slight movement. Examples of these kinds of joints are the pubic symphysis (where the two ends of the pubic bones are connected by cartilage) and between the ribs and their connection to the sternum. Slight movement is allowed in all these areas but large ranges of movement are not desirable.
- Synovial joints, where there is a space (the synovial cavity) between the bones. This type of joint provides the greatest degree of movement in a variety of ways.

Yoga does not try to increase the range of movement in all three kinds of joints; however, for a cartilaginous joint that has grown too tight, Yin Yoga can help to restore the normal range of motion. Yin Yoga helps rebuild the synovial joints and even extend the current range of motion.

The Spine

"Yoga is the fountain of youth. You're only as young as your spine is flexible." (B.K.S. Iyengar)

The human spine undergoes changes and is not fully developed until the age of 10, when the lumbar curve finally assumes its full curve and adult shape. Humans are very peculiar among vertebrates; we are the only true bipeds on the planet and also one of the least mechanically stable creatures. From an architectural point of view it is clear that we have the smallest base of support, the highest center of gravity, and the heaviest cranium in proportion to the total body weight, than any other mammal. The head is very heavy (about 4-5kg) and sits at the top of this



exquisite structure increasing the challenge to remain balanced and with good posture. Fortunately, the human spine provides the best integral support possible for all areas of the upper body. The spine has extraordinary capabilities of rigidity and also plasticity; in other words, it can be flexible and have a great range of motion (this is especially true on those who practice Yoga), and at the same time provide structure and stability to all body parts.

The spinal column is able to neutralize a combination of tensile and compressive forces to which we are subjected on a daily basis by not only physical activity, but also gravity itself.

When a baby is in the womb, gravity is almost negligible, as the baby floats peacefully in amniotic fluid. Upon birth, gravity is felt with full strength for the first time and this is when the early spine along with still developing bones, tendons and muscles must immediately respond by growing and becoming strong

and flexible.

The vertebral column (backbone or spine) consists of 24 articulating vertebrae, and 9 fused vertebrae in the sacrum and the coccyx. It is separated by intervertebral discs and it houses and protects the spinal cord in its spinal canal.

The upper 24 articulating vertebrae are grouped under the names cervical (7 vertebrae), thoracic (12 vertebrae) and lumbar (5 vertebrae), according to the regions they occupy.

Cervical: 7 vertebrae (C1–C7)

Thoracic: 12 vertebrae (T1–T12)

Lumbar: 5 vertebrae (L1–L5)

Sacral: 5 (fused) vertebrae (S1–S5)

Coccygeal: 4 (3–5) (fused) vertebrae (Tailbone)

Intervertebral discs (or intervertebral fibrocartilage) lie between adjacent vertebrae in the spine. Each disc forms a cartilaginous joint to allow slight movement of the vertebrae, and acts as a ligament to hold the vertebrae together. It also has the role of protecting the spinal integrity by serving as a cushion to absorb impact and external forces.

Spinal Movement

There are four possible movements for the spine: Flexion, extension, rotation (axial rotation or twisting), and lateral flexion (side bending). These four movements are performed over the course of daily life, and the spine will develop just enough flexibility and range of motion to be able to easily withstand habitual movements. Yoga provides an arena for the spinal column to truly shine. Yoga asana encompasses the four basic movements of the spine, usually gently and gradually pushing the boundaries that daily habits have created. The result, over time, is the increased range of motion (ROM) and the angle of axial rotation that the spine can achieve without injury. By doing this you will provide your whole skeleton with a more solid yet flexible foundation. You will be able to withstand physical stress, prevent injuries and naturally correct your standing and sitting posture.

When healthy and possessing all its normal curves, the spine acts like a spring. Every time we increase the pressure on our body- for example, by walking or running- the spine flexes. The curves deepen and then release. If our spine was a straight rod, the stresses would fall in between the vertebrae, and the discs cushioning the vertebrae would wear out quite quickly. Of course, the ligaments wrapping the spine also take some of the strain, but these are more responsible for taking the strain of passive activities such as sitting or standing. Our muscles support the dynamic movement of the spine.

All forms of yoga can help strengthen the back. Yin Yoga can help reestablish the normal range of motion of the lumbar ligaments as well; but remember everybody's bones are different. When we practice moving our spine through its full and natural ranges of motion, we should be aware

of going too far. Be aware of pain or its precursors. Don't stay in a pose when the sensations of the poses are too difficult for you to deal with. The essence of the yin practice is to maintain a gentle but persistent pressure for a long period of time.

Additional Physiological Benefits of Yin Yoga

If we consider the joints and bones being targeted by Yin Yoga, we can describe at least three big additional benefits for our wellbeing:

- Prevent or reduce contracture, where the ligaments and the joint capsule shrink and reduce the joint's mobility.
- Avoiding degeneration within the bones, and reduce fixation, a condition that limits the movement of our joints, and thus prevents fusion, a permanent loss of mobility in the joint.
- Reduce osteopenia and osteoporosis, which are dangerous reductions in bone density.

Metaphysical Anatomy and Physiology & Yin yoga



NECK - The director of our vision and direction: Structurally, the only real meaning of the neck is that it holds our head on. Anytime one experiences a conflict between ideals and reality, the neck may experience a sympathetic response in the form of misaligned bones, nerve pain or difficulty moving or turning the head. Yin Yoga

introspection may help you find ways to narrow the gap between idea and fact. Also finding ways to remove the conflict and get your head on straight again.

SHOULDERS - Bearing of the load: The shoulders are the only part of the body that can carry a heavy weight for any great length of time. Anytime we experience stress or change to the burden-bearing part of our life (such as too much responsibility at work or a change in our workload) we may experience a sympathetic response in the form of pain, loss of strength or nerve-conditions to the shoulder areas. Yin Yoga Introspection may aid us to discover ways of

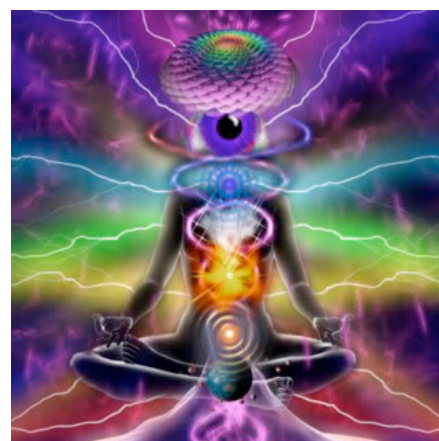
workload reduction. Though that is easier said than done, in many cases, Yin yoga will aid our condition to get better from discovering new pathways and understanding why the problem began in the first place.

ARMS - Reaching out to others: Turbulent relationships, particularly between us and our loved ones, (family, friends, partners, etc.), will trigger a sympathetic response that causes pain, weakness, numbness or other distress to the arms. Yin Yoga introspection may aid in finding the strength to seek relationship counsel, find the stress and remove it. Sometimes that means working on one's own relating skills, while other situations may require work on our partners, co-workers or other important social contacts.

HANDS & FINGERS - The tools of the trade: To the metaphysical body, our hands are our profession in life. Whatever we have put our hands to as a career; our relationship to it is reflected in the strength and health of our hands and fingers. Any sudden trauma or change to our work-skills, such as a lay-off or job-transfer, can cause a sympathetic response in the form of pain, weakness or other distress to the hands. Yin Yoga introspection can aid in re-discovering and re-evaluate your professional skills and job-performance, seeking a less stressful or more enjoyable work for your hands to do. While this may involve career-change, it may also be a simple matter of continuing education or even shared work-duties, to free your hands for happier employment.

THE UPPER SPINE - Self-love and Self-esteem: How we hold ourselves as a person. Our posture means to the metaphysical body our Self-opinion. This is largely determined by our basic philosophy in life. Anytime we experience trauma to that philosophy or the self-esteem it gives us, we may experience a sympathetic change in the spinal bones leading to a wide array of pains, spasms, nerve-flow abnormalities and other problems. Yin Yoga introspection may aid us with a philosophic review looking for any possible out-dated ideas about ourselves that the trauma points out to. This also includes any self-esteem problems we may be having.

SACRUM (BASE OF THE SPINE) - That which is sacred: At the very foundation of one's philosophy in life is something that one holds sacred or life giving. When we disconnect



ourselves from the divine and our divinity there may be a sympathetic response in the form of sacral pain, bone-misalignment or other injury. Yin Yoga introspection will lead to a reconnection with divinity by whatever means is possible, whether meditation training, spiritual development courses or any religion you may resonate with. The real issue is realignment with the divine; the details must fit your own ideas or experience of what divinity is.

HIPS - Emotional luggage storage: The hips are linked to a metaphysical energy reservoir of decades of luggage and baggage that we can carry for prolonged periods of time. Many times we have stored traumatic events that occurred in our childhood which haven't been dealt with and therefore remain unresolved. Yin Yoga hip openers will often trigger the strongest emotional releases for this reason. It is not uncommon to observe emotional shifts that will manifest in the physical body in a wide range that goes from tears and sadness to laughter and profound joy.

LEGS & KNEES - Bowing to greater good: These sites are associated with inner will and spiritual strength. Pain and aches of the knees are signs for us to stop fighting a battle that is not worth winning or that is not aligned with our higher purpose. It's a sign that we need to surrender and find our inner purpose once again before carrying on with our journey. Yin Yoga introspection may help us defeat Ego that forces us to carry on towards the wrong direction or for the wrong reasons; instead, finding our true purpose, journey, and the spiritual goals which are truly worth fighting for.

ANKLES - Flexibility in our lives: Ankles represent flexibility, which is important as one navigates the twists and turns of Life. Stiff, painful ankles means that change is difficult for you. Maybe you are one who digs in your heels and resists moving forward. The more life forces change upon you, the deeper you dig in. A broken ankle is a good sign to develop some flexibility in your life. Yin Yoga introspection will lead to physical and metaphysical flexibility of body, mind and soul.

FEET - Grounding to Mother Earth: Sore, swollen, numb or painful feet represent the state of our relation with Mother Earth, and our base energies. While it is our legs that carry us forward

into life, it is the feet that actually make contact with the ground and can stop or make difficult any advance. In modern society, with its asphalt, concrete and high-rises, we lose touch with the Earth and its energies. This may be reflected in our relationship to the one who gave birth to us. Separation can cause real pain. Yin Yoga introspection will nurture our need and desire to go back to basics. Small things such as walking bare feet on sand or dirt can go a long way.