

Advanced Meridian Study for Yin Yoga Teachers



Gregory Dunn

The Meridians: A Universe Within

Welcome to Advanced Meridian Study for Yin Yoga Teachers. This module takes us deeper into the study of meridians beyond what was discussed and taught in Level 1. We move beyond the names, the descriptions and the locations, and into a truly transformational and application-based study where the focus shifts from your own self healing to the healing of your students during Yin Yoga.

After completing Level 1 Teacher Training with My Health Yoga you will have some understanding of the 12 main meridians as understood by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and their application in Asana practice. In Level 1, we explored where the meridians ran physically on our bodies, and also played with different Asanas which could help balance the Qi (Prana, Energy) in the Meridians in order to achieve greater physical, emotional and spiritual balance. For the purpose of Yin Teacher Training, we will now explore the use of the Meridians, their sounds, colours, emotions and energy flow, in order to create an environment of true healing, balance and love for our Yin class setting.

Thank you for joining me on this journey and I trust you will enjoy the Meridian module.

– Dr. Gregory Dunn (BHSc Acu, reg. Acupuncturist AHPRA).

TRUE Healing: Using Meridians in Yin Yoga

Many yoga students are first led to asana practice, meditation and study, in an effort to heal. For some, this healing is self contained – they are driven to ‘fix’ something within themselves which they perceive as ‘unwell’, or ‘broken’. For others, it comes from a desire to heal their friends and family. For a rare few, it is a desire to give back to the universe and spread healing, peace and love.

Today, Yoga is finally becoming more recognized worldwide as an effective tool to heal. But why is it so effective? What makes Asana practice, meditation and yogic lifestyle choices so incredibly healing? How is it that by studying yoga, practicing asana and living a life of self love, we can expect to find peace and health? There must be a mechanism internally which facilitates this healing? Can Yoga – and indeed Meridians – help to “fix us?”

The Meridians of Chinese Medicine are known to be the oldest medicinal healing device in the world we know. Older than the healing tools of the Buddhists, Egyptians, Greeks and other ancient civilizations, some Chinese texts date back over three thousand years and reveal precise measurements, qualities and descriptions of these channels (vessels of energy) and, in great detail, exactly how they can be used to balance the physical, mental and emotional body/s. Similar to the Buddhists meditation and path to ascendance, Eastern healers used meridians physically, as well as meditation (stillness) and guided emotional state focus (Tai Qi, Qi Gong) to create an atmosphere of peace internally and achieve a state of health which they simply called ‘balance’. Rather than the more Western way of diagnosing sickness and seeking a cure to ‘fix’, the Eastern (Chinese and Buddhist) philosophy of healing is about creating an avenue for awareness and acceptance, and allowing our natural balance to return. Despite what was happening externally, the focus on internal peace and a vibration of harmony meant not only were the healers of Chinese Medicine incredibly vibrant, youthful and energized, but even their students and patients experienced great healing and recovery. This does not mean that they were ‘fixed’, but that they recognized that their current state was already divine and perfect. To become a healer meant (and, with Yin, still does), that we facilitate a space for awareness and acceptance. Not that we strive to fix, change or alter in an attempt to create a state which society deems ‘healthy’. This is not true healing.

To understand how the Meridians facilitate true healing, and to be able to facilitate true healing in our Yin class environment, we first need to ascertain exactly what **true healing** means.

With Western cultures beginning to branch out from modern medicinal methods of controlling health, such as pharmaceuticals and surgery, we will find once again that ancient powers of healing (Meridians, Yoga) are becoming more and more popular and recognized for their ability to create balance (true health). Some schools of medicine argue against the natural modalities, and, ignorantly, demand research or ‘proof’ that they in fact ‘work’. The truth is, this is again the modern day ego demanding a mental explanation for something that needs to be fixed. This cannot be done, and will be a fruitless endeavor that will result in frustration and disappointment on both sides of the argument. The reason this argument is fruitless is simple. The goal of Yoga, and Chinese Medicine, is to create TRUE healing, which means, to grant awareness of the present condition and state and then to provide the right space for acceptance. In this manner, the body/mind/spirit become balanced and true healing takes place instantly.

TRUE healing is very different to the mentality of curing disease or 'fixing' someone who is sick. If you are in pain, modern medicine wants to take the pain away. If you are mentally depressed, modern medicine wants to improve your mood. The goal of yogis is not to think in the future and push ourselves towards a place of being fixed. Trying to fix ourselves, or to fix others, actually means we are constantly comparing ourselves (or our students) to our own ego's 'version' of health. In actual fact, when our meridians are used correctly and we notice where our energy (Prana, Qi) is located at anytime, Yin yoga allows us to achieve true healing. True acceptance of our present state. Without a desire to change, to fix, or to push ourselves towards a state that seems more 'healthy'.

Remember, in the universe around and within us, there is no right or wrong. Everything just exists, or doesn't. Nothing in nature can truly be sick, or require healing. Everything that exists is already perfect. In every microsecond of being conscious, nature is healing and healed.

Animals, plants, and in fact the entire cosmos, has no limited descriptions of what is 'good' and 'bad', or 'healthy' and 'unhealthy'. This descriptive modern language is best forgotten when teaching Yin. You will need to choose to forget the notions of 'good' and 'bad' when you are preparing to teach Yin, because using this language will limit your ability to heal and the student's ability to find peace and acceptance. Remember – the terms 'sick' and 'healthy' are extremely new age descriptions of an ideal state that human kind has created using our combined ego (comparative) mind state. In actual fact, we are all simply 'one'.

We are all a summation of two opposing energies in various ratios, and, depending on the stronger energy and where it is in our Meridians (emotionally, physically and mentally), we will then make the choice to describe ourselves (and others) as "sick" or "healthy". In any one moment, your energy (Prana, Qi) will be strongest in one (or more) meridian/s (if you have an injury your energy will be excess in that meridian such as Gall Bladder, or if you are mentally imbalanced you may feel weak energy in a particular meridian such as the Spleen). Noticing the quality and location of the energy and working out the associated emotion, physical sensation and mind state, you will then have the option to choose acceptance and release of control, or to choose fear and struggle to be 'fixed' or 'cured'. This is a forked path which your students may pause at during any or every Asana in Yin class. It is now your role as a Yin instructor to create the physical, emotional and mental space for each student to choose the path of acceptance during every breath of every pose in every one of your classes. That is how Yin teachers facilitate healing. Not by promising that with regular classes someone will be 'fixed', their pain will 'improve' or they will 'open up'. All of these descriptions are in fact comparing the present state to a point in the future where things will be 'better', therefore how can the student truly be at peace in the now? Your job is to facilitate instant healing in the present moment.

We use the meridians to raise awareness and to self-educate on our present state. We then use Yin Asana, and Pranayama, to facilitate acceptance and release of this present state so that the universal energy may flow through us and create balance internally and externally between our Yin and Yang. Only then will we find **true healing** takes place.

Yin and Yang: Healing by Balancing

Every atom in the universe is comprised of Yin and Yang elements. Chinese Healing (Acupuncture, Meridian therapy) and Yoga are similar in that both of these schools look to achieve harmony between the intense energy of Yang and the gentle energy of Yin.

At any time, one energy field will be somewhat stronger than the other in each atom, each cell, each organ and system and human being. Depending on the strength and which is which, we may feel physically, emotionally or mentally unbalanced. However, we are still whole.

We can never be cured, as we are never actually unwell. We are always whole. It is simply where are energy lies (in the meridians which form our entire physical energy circuitry) that manifests a you are feeling pain, inflammation, anger or frustration, your “wholeness” may be 80% Yang and 20% Yin. You are still 100%, however you are experiencing more Yang energy. You do not need to change in order to ‘heal’. Likewise, if you are feeling depressed, lackluster, bloated and sluggish, you may be 75% Yin and 24% Yang. Again, you do not need to be fixed! There is nothing that needs to change. In this moment, you are perfect, and you are whole. Once your mind, body and heart are willing to accept your current state, your vibration will naturally begin to rebalance and you will feel better. However, this does not mean you have healed. You didn’t need to. 24hours a day, 365 days a year, you are perfect. The Meridians are used to create balance, and to create awareness. Technically they are not used to heal. True healing is simply the practice of self discovery and self acceptance. If you don’t realize what parts of your psyche, mentality, emotions, physicality and energy are Yin and which are Yang, you cannot have awareness and therefore you cannot have acceptance, so you will not be present to heal. This explains why we often refer to Yoga (and Meridians) as tools to heal. Yoga, and Meridians, do not actually heal. They simply create a space for awareness in which we can make the choice to accept our state. This acceptance is TRUE HEALING. It is always our choice.

To truly heal is something we can do immediately. It’s just a choice. It requires nothing: no money, no time, no effort, no energy, no change. You can do it now, reading this very page. For some you can simply take a breath and acknowledge that your current state is perfect. You are then healed, and every second you will continue to heal (find balance). For others, it will be challenging to accept your current state (particularly if you are physically, mentally or emotionally unbalanced). But, please remember the stronger your resistance is in the present moment, the more you are learning and strengthening your own cosmic energy. Use a mantra whenever you need to realize your own healing is taking place. Remember, every second of the day, you are healing. You are always whole. Simply find a moment where you can be still and quiet, close your eyes, find your center, and feel the moment. This is **true healing**.

Mantra: “I am physically, mentally and emotionally exactly where and how I need to be. The current moment is perfect, and I accept everything I am in the NOW. I have no desire to go back to where I have been, nor do I wish to rush forward and change. I find peace in this moment, and I require nothing to be fixed.”

YANG YOGA vs. YIN YOGA

It is fantastic that you have chosen to study, and possibly teach, Yin Yoga. However, what would you say to a student who asked what Yang yoga is? Do you practice Yang yoga? Chances are, you do, or you have.

Modern yoga is very Yang. It was brought to the West during the 1960's and 1970's, and our culture fitted better with Yang asana practice as fitted in with our lifestyle.

Although this is a generalisation, it may be said that the Eastern cultures are more spiritual, connected, slow paced and in tune with energy - as a rule. In Japan it is considered ill mannered to eat standing up. In China a funeral lasts sometimes for 49 days. In the West, we eat on the go and often don't even have time to grieve! It is truly a different culture in many ways, and can be described as the Yang to the Yin of the East.

We in the West have a tendency to overfill our days, overspend our budgets, overthink our jobs, over commit our social lives; we are always busy, stressed and often feel worn out. This is a generalisation as well, but unfortunately it is quite a common. You will see this in your students as a teacher.

Since we are in a Yang environment, the Yang styles of yoga felt more "comfortable" to the West and soon grew in popularity. For example, Hot Yoga, came to the West in the 1980s and 1990s, making millions and millions of dollars and developing a following of millions of new "Yogis" around the Western world. Of course, Hot Yoga (in it's original form) was only a small taste of what Yoga truly can bring. But, for those students who had never before been attracted to Asana practice, visiting a Hot Yoga studio where the chants, candles, meditation, and – controversially – *spirituality* – had been stripped bare, was the easiest transition into the Yogic lifestyle. Vinyasa, Ashtanga and Acro-yoga were also able to grow in popularity quickly as they could be marketed to our egos. "Lose weight, tone up, increase muscle mass, target your abs" are the draw cards which some studios use for Yang yoga. However, this type of practice is so Yang that inevitably it leads to a mental, emotional or physical shut down. We cannot sustain purely on our ego plane for an extended period of time. After only one or two decades, the popularity of Yang yoga is already fading.

This is not to take away from the importance of creditability of Yang Asana styles – please do not be mistaken. Vinyasa, Hot Yoga and Ashtanga are all extremely important parts of the Yoga student's life. However, we must not be solely immersed in Yang practice alone. We must balance it with Yin.

For those who are very sensitive (Capha types), it may be that they aren't particularly interested in Yang yoga at all, and immediately are drawn to the nourishing, nurturing and restorative practice of Yin. For others who are more Yang in nature (Vatta), they may be so obsessed with Asana practice that they follow Ashtanga or creative Vinyasa for many years, possibly reaching the ultimate depths of physical Yang asana (strong balances, incredible spine and joint flexibility). When Yang yoga reaches extremes such as this, it becomes a way of 'dealing' with the emotions and the psyche and can become very addictive. While it seems strange to classify Asana as an addiction, when someone is practicing intensely Yang asana daily for many hours and their body begins to show signs of strain, injury, fatigue or the Yogi is losing weight, these may be signs that their Yang energy is simply too strong and the body and mind are desperately seeking Yin. For most of us, we will explore both realms of yoga and, particularly as we go through different stages in our life and our circumstances change, we will naturally be drawn more to one style at different times.

For many in the West, we first meet Yoga through Yang asana, however after exploring Yang asanas for some time we then become intrigued in more Yin styles. This is why so many Teachers first start of as students, and after practicing for a few months or even years they then seek a Teacher Training program to explore the more Yin qualities of the Yogic lifestyle – spirituality, groundingness and energy.

Remember – we are most attracted to what is inside our comfort zone. If someone is busy, active and outgoing, they will first be attracted to Yang styles of Asana. In actual fact, Yin may be more beneficial to create balance. Vice versa is applicable for someone who is quiet, introverted or unmotivated, they may be better off learning Vinyasa or creative flow.

If this confuses you – just look outside at nature. Notice that nothing exists without its exact opposite. For midday we have midnight, for sunrise we have sunset. For the deep oceans we have the vast dry deserts, for the depths of the Earth we have the far reaches of the atmosphere. Our goal as Yogis is to continually observe where we are in terms of Yin and Yang in our physical, mental and emotional state, and then work more balance into our life using appropriate practice of Pranayama, meditation and Asana.

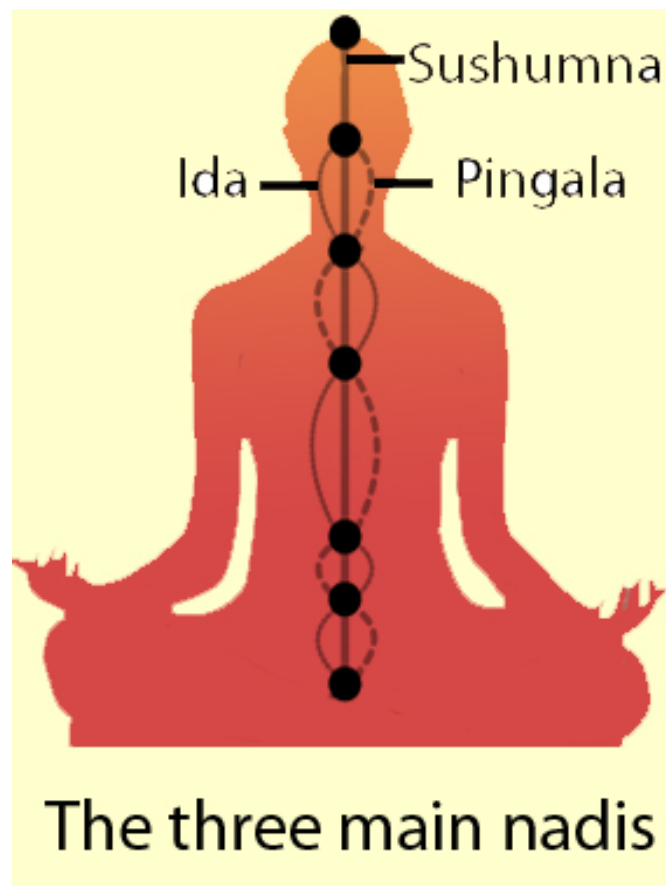
The world around us shows us exactly how we need to practice Yoga. For Yang yoga, it is like the daylight hours. Spend time warming up, then being active, then cooling down. For Yin, spend time becoming comfortable, then deep in meditation, then slowly waking up. Our Asana and meditation practice should be as balanced as the cycle of the sun and moon. Constant, gentle and balanced.

MERDIANS AND YIN YOGA: Going Deeper

We know that every cell, system and being in the cosmos is actually a compilation of Yin and Yang energies. And, within each human being, we have channels in which cosmic energy (Qi, Prana or bio-magnetic energy) must flow smoothly in order for life to be sustained.

Different schools of study describe different avenues or pathways for this energy to flow. For the purpose of Yin yoga, we must acknowledge the importance of the Nadis. Similar to the Meridians of TCM, for the Nadis to be in true health (balance), Prana must be in constant, even movement. In fact, the term “Nadi” comes from the word *Nad* (Sanskrit: movement).

Nadis, you will know from your Level 1 course, are conduits for Kundalini (spiritual) energy which is stored in the sacrum and travels upwards towards Crown Chakra during meditation and Asana practice. Although Ayurveda mentions 72,000 Nadis, we commonly discuss and refer to three main Nadis; Ida, Pingala and Sushumna (pictured below).



Ancient Ayurveda students relied upon the Nadis the same way that Chinese healers used Meridians. However, the Meridians are able to tell us more detailed information due to the descriptive emotional, physical and mental connections and the direct correlation between each Meridian and its associated organ (called Zang Fu). Remembering that Yin yoga is simply a quest for information in order to achieve acceptance and **true health**, we need as much information as we can in order to accept as much as we can and therefore heal as much as we can. Meridians become a diagnostic tool which we have the time and space to explore during the Asanas of Yin Yoga.

Energy, called Qi in Chinese Medicine, was described in Ancient Chinese texts as the mechanism for every cell to communicate with the next. Without communication our nervous, circulatory and endocrine systems would not be able to work together. Life could not be sustained.

Qi flows through many meridians in the body; including the 12 main meridians of which 6 are Yin and 6 are Yang. They correlate with 6 Yin organs and 6 Yang organs, each of which has its own personality – from smell to taste, colour and sound, emotion, purpose, nature, and more. These main meridians link the vital organs inside with the muscles and skin on the body's surface. They are the connection between every cell, organ, system and between the nature of Yin (internal) and Yang (external) in every life form.

Although the Nadis and Meridians differ in location and cause, both have one common property: *Health is represented by the flow of energy.*

Sickness, dis-ease and pain are examples of energy which is not flowing correctly. Remember that nothing exists in our physical body without a connected thought and emotion. It is simple metaphysical fact. Every single thought we process mentally then has a corresponding emotional vibration which is stored in a physical cell and creates a change in the flow of energy associated with that meridian. Sometimes it may be linked through the emotion of the Meridian (for example Liver meridian emotion is Frustration), and sometimes it may simply be due to the location of the meridian (ST meridian is located near the eye) as demonstrated below:

I am in denial → I choose not to see → Qi blocked in Stomach meridian → Eye problems.

I am frustrated → I feel constant resistance → Liver meridian becomes stagnant → Pain.

Therefore, when using Asana to identify areas where energy may be blocked, deficient or excess, we must remember to be very open minded. We aren't looking for the cause of pain, and we aren't looking for the answers to our mind's questions. We just notice what we notice, we accept everything, and we move on. That is enough for **true healing** to take place, remember.

ADVANCED MERIDIANS: Interpreting What We Discover

Let's now discuss how we can use the Meridians in Yin Asana practice to help our students to do three important things in every Yin class:

1. Become aware of what 'is'.
2. Accept what 'is'.
3. Release what 'is'.

This is the simplest formula for Yin Asana practice which exists, however, it is incredibly powerful. Apply those three rules now to any pain you have felt or injury you have. Or, to a state of your mind or your ego. You can apply to it off the mat too, of course, in your relationships, job, or with your self during self-reflection. Inevitably then, every single part of the self becomes choice, and it becomes impossible and pointless to create blame. There IS no external problems. Everything is as it is, and, when we choose to see this truth and let it go, we move into the next space and the next state.

As we learn more about each Yin Meridian, you will start to work out your own way of using this three-step check list when you teach.

One of the easiest ways to get started is this: If a student comes to you for the first time and admits that they haven't practiced Yin Yoga before as they are so busy and they find it hard to sit still they don't enjoy Yin, you can invite them to your class and use the three steps to help them find balance. When you talk briefly about their lifestyle and likes/dislikes before class you will use your knowledge of the Meridians (coming up soon!) to work out what emotions, organs and Meridians will be effected, and then use your teaching techniques to help this student find balance. Essentially, they need to strengthen their Yin energy and subdue their Yang energy to find balance.

If you find they are stressed and frustrated, then, using your Advanced Yin Meridian Notes (next section) you can work out there are two main Yin Meridians which will be effected (Spleen and Liver), and then have a clear understanding of what will help them during the class. For the Spleen, it may be gentle massage through the inner leg or guided meditation to quiet their mind. For the Liver it may be releasing anger/frustration using Pranayama or it may be sitting in cross legged pose (Sukhasana or another hip/knee/ankle opener) to physically release Qi flowing through the Liver meridian.

Once you have this information, you can then work with the student during class to become aware of what is happening physically, mentally and emotionally. It may take a few classes, but in time the student will come to accept their current state. Finally, after regular practice and guidance, they will hopefully choose to 'release' control and move into the next state.

You have then used your knowledge of Advanced Meridians to decipher what is stored and where, and the three-step check list above to help them discover **true healing**.

If you do this process to at least one student per class (with years of practice and teaching it will become second nature and you will easily do this process to your entire class!), your Yin Classes will be full and in demand, and you will feel energized and an immense sense of purpose from your teaching.

ADVANCED YIN MERIDIAN STUDY NOTES

We will now discuss in detail each Yin Organ, and its associated meridian. We will discuss the 5 Main Yin Organs, missing the Pericardium (linked with the Triple Warmer), as the we can use the Heart for the Pericardium.

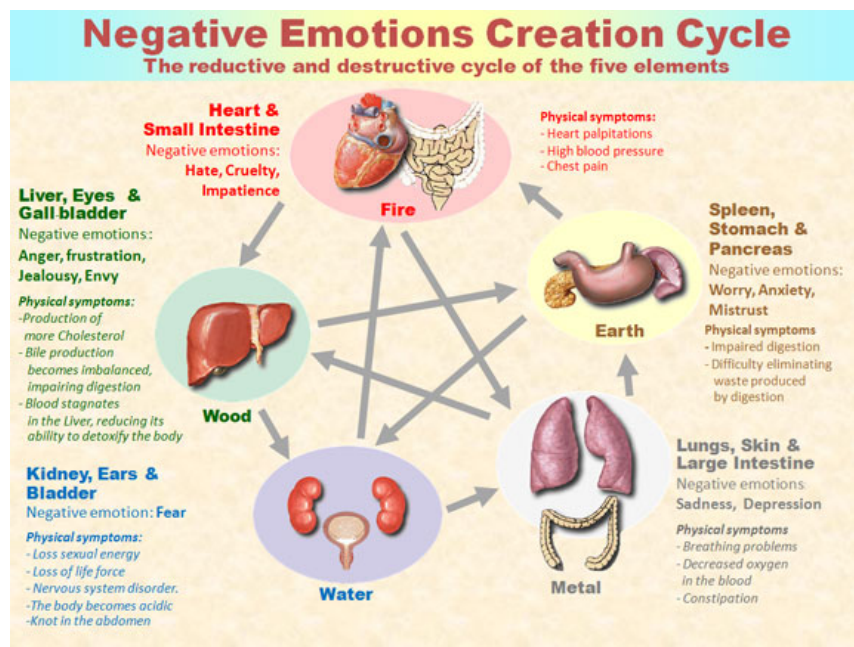
However, this section is very different to your Level 1 Training. Rather than looking just at which Asana physically matches which Meridian, now you will focus more on the intention of your words and your teaching on an energetic level. Regardless of which Yin pose you are teaching, you can describe the physical, mental and emotional benefits according to the student/s which you are healing. The magic of Yin happens when your voice and energy strikes a cord with the student's mind. It is not about identifying which Meridian to 'stretch' and then putting them in the pose and leaving them there. It is an energetic connection. Remember to use the three-step check list we discussed previously.

We will now discuss the 5 Yin Organs which we use in Yin Yoga to create balance, Spleen, Heart, Liver, Kidney and Lung. Remember, each has a Western application (modern biological purpose) and a Chinese Application (how we use the organ in Chinese Medicine/Acupuncture and how it applies to Yin Asana practice).

Each Yin Organ has an associated Yang partner which you may work out on your own when a student reports a physical/mental/emotional concern. If they are describing a Yang Condition, look at which Yin Organ you will then be working in your practice to help them find balance.

You can use the diagram below to remind yourself of the Yang partners to each Yin organ, and also briefly of their associated Element (Nature).

E.g.: If your student reports to class with constipation. This is a Yang condition (Large Intestine: "letting go"). Check the partner (Lung: "grief"). Use Asana and Pranayama to process grief and facilitate the process of "letting go" emotionally, and then the physical release will happen as a result.



SPLEEN

The Spleen is the Yin Organ paired with the Stomach (Yang). In Western pathology it plays important roles in cellular health, cleansing and immunity. Traditionally, the Spleen has two jobs: the transportation and transformation of water. This means it must direct water through the body and transform it (energy, growth or waste) where needed. The Spleen forms the Yin (EARTH ELEMENT) so is the most grounding of the meridians.

The Spleen meridian runs through the inside of the leg, from the inside of the big toe through the inner thigh past the groin and finishes towards the arm pit. For Yin Yoga, it is important to remember that the Spleen meridian travels through the inside of the leg and is involved with water retention, energy stagnation and pain through the inside of the leg.

The flow of Qi (energy) through the Spleen meridian is disrupted when we are stressed or from overthinking. Signs that Qi is not flowing correctly through the Spleen meridian include water retention, gas or bloating, loose stools, swollen (large) tongue shape and anxiety.

Practicing any style of Yin (seated or lying) Asana is fantastic for the Spleen meridian, and will therefore help calm the mind. The Spleen meridian is benefited by meditation, warmth, warm foods and by creating space mentally. Making lists, organizing your day and prioritizing your time is important when you feel your Spleen energy is out of balance. Anyone who has dry lips or craves sugar tends to be Spleen Qi deficient, i.e. The Qi running through the Spleen organ and meridian is not nourished. Sugar serves as a fake energy source for the mind, so when we are stressed or anxious we crave sugar to help the Spleen keep going. This however impacts on the Yang partner (Stomach) which explains why sugar then leads to heat in the tonsils, sore throat, mouth ulcers, dry lips and dry skin. In actual fact, eating a warm, nourishing diet will give the Spleen the balanced Qi it needs and we won't crave sugar. Also it will help us to stay focused and mentally calm.

SYMPTOMS OF IMBALANCE:	Impaired digestion, swollen ankles/calves, anxiety, insomnia.
ELEMENT:	Earth
YANG PAIR:	Stomach
ASSOCIATED BODY PART:	Lips
TISSUES:	Muscles
TASTES:	Sweet
EMOTIONS:	Worry, over thinking, anxiety, mental fatigue.
BODY TYPE:	Large features, strong legs, calm, generous.
COLOUR:	Yellow
VIRTUES:	Fairness
SENSE:	Taste
SOUND:	Whoooooo (From the throat, guttural, deep, ghost-like).

HEART

The Heart is the Yin Organ paired with the Small Intestine (Yang). In Western pathology, it is the electronic pump which sends oxygenated blood out to the extremities for growth, life and energy. In Chinese medicine the Heart is the Shen (home) for the mind. It is actually the place where our spirit resides. At night time, our mind is said to reside in the Shen and requires blood to be nourished and to rest. This explains why eating too late affects our sleep: if there is too much blood in the digestive system, the Heart is not nourished and the Shen can not travel to the Heart to rest, so the mind stays active. It also explains why mental disorders are classified as excess Yang energy. When the mind is not comfortable in the Heart (heart-break, grief, shock, alcoholism or illicit drug use), the blood is not nourished and the Shen spends too long out of the Heart. Without regularly resting in the Heart, the mind becomes too Yang (upward), and spirals up continually out of control. Hysterics, psychosis and mania result. Mental disorders can therefore be helped by practicing Yin (grounding) techniques and by nourishing the blood (detoxification), which will help ground the mind and encourage the Shen (spirit) to return to its home (Heart). This is just one example of how the Heart works in Chinese Medicine.

The Heart meridian runs from the center of the armpit down the Yin surface (underside) of the arm toward the little finger. The most Yin surface of our arms is Heart 1 Acupoint (center of armpit) which explains why Balasana (Childs Pose) is like "Hugging Mother Earth"; we connect our most Yin Point (Heart 1) to the Yin of the Earth. Hugging, by nature, is the connection of Heart Energy (Unconditional Love) between two souls/spirits.

When the Heart energy is disturbed or the meridian is not flowing with Qi, we can experience excess Yang energy such as pins and needles in the arm, numbness, giggling fits/excess or inappropriate laughter, light headedness or high blood pressure.

SYMPTOMS OF IMBALANCE:	High Blood Pressure, Yang (Mental) Disorders, Arm Numbness or Pain
ELEMENT:	Fire
ASSOCIATED BODY PART:	Tongue
TISSUES:	Vessels
TASTES:	Bitter
EMOTIONS:	Excess or insincere joy
BODY TYPE:	Pointed features, small hands, fast movements.
COLOUR:	Red
VIRTUES:	Honour, sincerity
SENSE:	Bitter
SOUND:	Haaaaaww (Mouth wide open, releasing Yang (heat) from Small Intestine).

LIVER

The Liver is the Yin Organ paired with the Gall Bladder (Yang). The Liver detoxifies the blood in Western biology, however, in Chinese Medicine it not only nourishes our blood but controls the movement of Qi (energy) through every single Meridian in our body. The Liver is said to control the “free flow” of Qi.

The Liver is sensitive, and is easily frustrated. Any resistance of Qi flow will lead to frustration, and can develop into anger. It's Yang pair (Gall Bladder) will then become excess Qi (energy) causing pain and tension through the Yang meridians of the outside legs and outside ribcage.

When Liver Qi becomes stuck (in any Meridian), we feel frustrated, irritable and annoyed. A physical injury or dis-ease can lead to Liver Qi Stagnation (Energy becoming stuck), or, our own thoughts and inability to release control of our surroundings (when we become resistant and don't practice non-attachment) will likewise lead to Liver Qi Stagnation.

Alcohol is temporary cure for Liver Qi stagnation, as it softens the emotions and allows the energy to flow for a moment creating the illusion of balance. However, it is short lived, and as soon as the alcohol begins to wear off (detoxify) we find the problem has actually grown. The best way to move Liver Qi (any Qi stuck in the body) is physically to walk or stretch, or, if unable to do so, to simply breathe and focus on the exhalation (to subdue the Yang).

SYMPTOMS OF IMBALANCE:	Anger, irritability, PMS, Menstrual Pain, Injury, Swollen Joints.
ELEMENT:	Wood
ASSOCIATED BODY PART:	Eyes
TISSUES:	Tendons
TASTES:	Sour
EMOTIONS:	Worry, over thinking, anxiety, mental fatigue.
BODY TYPE:	Tall, slender, strong bones and joints.
COLOUR:	Green
VIRTUES:	Kindness
SENSE:	Eyesight
SOUND:	Sssshhhhhh (tongue near palate, gentle 'Sshh' sound on exhale)

KIDNEY

The Kidney (we have two, however we discuss it as a single energy in Yin) is the Yin organ paired with the Bladder (Yang). In Western pathology our Kidney organs filter our blood and our fluids, and regulate the Adrenal (energy) glands. In Yin and Chinese Medicine, the Kidney energy is our life force. It is the inherited battery cell which controls our growth, development and every cellular function from conception to death. The Kidney stores our essence (Jing) which is comparable to the battery in your car. It can stay charged when you drive, however, it can also wear away and, if left untouched for too long, it can go flat or become disconnected.

The 5 Signs of Kidney Jing Deficiency are:

1. Knee and Lower Back Pain.
2. Hearing loss, ringing in the ears, Ear ache.
3. Low libido, infertility.
4. Grey hair or hair loss.
5. The emotion of fear.

Our Kidney energy is created when the sperm and egg first create life, and, from that instant, it cannot be changed. It cannot grow, or be restored. It only stays the same or weakens.

Since the Kidneys are effected by fear, it is a natural occurrence that Kidney energy declines as we grow older and become more fearful. In old age we are scared of death, and so we become scared of walking (knees) or supporting ourselves (lower back). We don't want to hear the truth (ear pain, hearing loss). Our battery does not sustain enough energy for reproduction (low libido, infertility). Our hair loses its youth and vitality, and we generally look and feel 'fearful'. This, however, can happen at any age for a variety of reasons. Shock can effect the hair (instant fear). Fear can effect the knees (Scared of moving forward in life). Stress can effect the lower back (not having enough to support oneself). All of these symptoms and conditions are interchangeable. Sometimes we can trace our Kidney energy to our parents: if someone has back pain, knee pain, hearing loss or hair loss, chances are they will see this in their mother and/or father. However, this is not always the case.

The Kidney energy can be strengthened and sustained by:

1. Keeping soles of feet and lower back warm (KD 1 is on sole of foot, Lower back is physical Kidney zone).
2. Salt Water foot baths (Salt helps the Kidneys, absorbed directly through Kidney meridian).
3. Release fear (practice forward folds and hip/knee openers to release fear of moving forward).
4. Limiting sexual partners.
5. Abstaining from artificial stimulants (Caffeine, Sugar, any exogenous hormones).

ELEMENT:	Water
ASSOCIATED BODY PART:	Ears
TISSUES:	Bone
TASTES:	Salty
EMOTIONS:	Fear
BODY TYPE:	Round features, strong digestion.
COLOUR:	Black/Royal Blue
VIRTUES:	Gentleness
SENSE:	Hearing
SOUND:	Chooooo (Like blowing out a candle with lips open as in "O")

LUNG

The Lung is the Yin Organ paired with the Large Intestine (Yang). Lungs have a similar meaning in Chinese Medicine/Yin Yoga as they do in Western Pathology, they control the inward and outward life force energy. The Lungs help generate Qi (Gu Qi, or Lung Energy) which sustains life. They bring this Qi to the Blood which the Heart then pumps through our body (light, love) and then we can use Pranayama and Asana to encourage waste products back to the Lung to be expelled through the exhalation.

The Lung is the Organ responsible for processing Grief, and is matched with the Large Intestine which is responsible for Letting Go. Together, these two organs form the most efficient tool in Yin Yoga we can use to do the third step of our three-step checklist ("Release"). Once we have done step 1 (Awareness) and step 2 (Acceptance), we can use our breathe (Pranayama) to help the Lungs process grief and find Yin/Yang balance, and then any physical waste will be released from the Large Intestine (Fecal matter, "Letting Go"). In this way, we can literally heal physically and emotionally at the same time.

The Lungs will eventually tire or wear out if we don't process Grief. If we hold on to grievances or a sense of unfair loss – be it after a relationship has ended, we have lost a job, we have lost a friend or we have had a family or friend physically pass away – the Lungs will attempt to heal by 'crying'. Crying is a physical mechanism which the body instinctively has learned to do in order to try and rebalance Yin and Yang energy in the Lung.

When we cannot say goodbye (to a person, place, thing, or situation), the body does not "let go", so our Large Intestine becomes stuck. The Lungs want to let go, so they begin to push energy downwards (descending the Lung Qi) to try and force the Large Intestine to let go. However, this causes an internal disharmony between Yin (downward Qi) and Yang (upward waste) which manifests as crying. This taxes on our Kidneys, Spleen and Heart (Fear, Worry and lack of Joy) and affects every cell and system in our body, as well as our emotions and mental state.

Crying is an important stage of grieving. Once our Lung energy has rebalanced, we will restore the Lung Qi to its natural Yin state and the Large Intestine will regulate our digestive system so that we have enough space to bring in new energy. We can't find a new job, a new relationship or create new memories when we are "full" (constipated) of our old memories. Pranayama is the perfect mechanism for releasing the old (exhale), creating space (during Kumbhaka we can manifest a new vibration), and then bringing in the new (inhale).

SYMPTOMS OF IMBALANCE:	Crying, Asthma, Bronchitis, Chest pain, Shortness of Breath
ELEMENT:	Metal
ASSOCIATED BODY PART:	Nose
TISSUES:	Skin
TASTES:	Pungent
EMOTIONS:	Sadness, Grief
BODY TYPE:	Triangular features, Strong voice
COLOUR:	White
VIRTUES:	Courage, righteousness
SENSE:	Touch (skin)
SOUND:	Ssssss (tongue behind teeth) like a snake, exhale breath

ACUPRESSURE POINTS FOR YIN CLASS

LIVER 3

Located between the big toe and second toe. Gently massage between these two toes looking for a depression towards the top of the foot. Locate any bulky or painful areas, and use gentle massage to soften this space.

Liver 3 is used to move anger, frustration or irritability out of the body and mind.



LARGE INTESTINE 4

Between thumb and first finger, massage in the mound of muscle/skin underneath the bone of the first finger looking for connective tissue that is tight and painful. Gently massage to release tension, and use deep exhale to release the stuck energy in the Large Intestine meridian and balance the energy in the Lung (Yin Organ paired with Large Intestine). This point will help with constipation and head ache.

NOTE: Please do not massage this point if you are pregnant.



KIDNEY 1

Kidney 1 is on the sole of the foot, and is an fantastic point for beginning your Yin Yoga class. You may ask your class to massage Kidney 1 themselves, or, for a small class or private lesson, you may do this for them.

Pressing Kidney 1 will draw the energy downward, almost like we “Earth” an electrical current. This will activate all Yin meridians, and calm and focus the mind.

Kidney 1 is used to ground, nourish and relax the entire body.



YIN TANG

We don't need to actually massage Yin Tang, as it is a location of spiritual energy. Ying Tang is used to regulate Melatonin to improve your sleep/wake cycle, and it also helps us to unwind and relax. It is directly underneath the Third Eye Chakra (Ajna) and on top of the Pineal Gland (Sleep Wake Cycle regulator).

In Savasana, mentally bring your focus to the point located directly between your eyebrows. You can use a crystal or eye pillow to help bring focus to this point and mentally create a strong energy field emanating from this location.

Yin Tang is one of the most relaxing, nourishing and Yin points we have in Chinese Medicine, and is an important way to finish Yin Yoga. It will help “Seal” your practice and the class energy.



6 HEALING SOUNDS REFERENCE CHART

(Six Healing Sounds)

Transform negative emotions to positive emotions.

By Mantak Chia, Universal Healing Tao Center

Lung ●

The Lung sound is a metal sound. It sounds like the vibration of a bell and activates the lung Chi.

Sound: **Sssssss** (Tongue behind Teeth)

Color: White

Emotions: Grief and Sadness

Virtues: Courage and Righteousness

Associated Organ: Large Intestine

Senses: Smell (Nose) and Touch (Skin)

Element: Metal

Season: Fall



Kidney ●

The Kidney sound is a water sound and it activates the kidney Chi.

Sound: **Chooooooooo** (As when blowing out a candle; lips forming an "O")

Color: Dark Blue

Emotion: Fear

Virtue: Gentleness, Calmness and Stillness

Associated Organ: Bladder

Senses: Hearing (Ears)

Element: Water

Season: Winter





Liver ●

The Liver sound is a wood sound and it activates the liver Chi.

Sound: **Shhhhhhh** (Tongue near Palate)

Color: Green

Emotion: Anger

Virtue: Kindness

Associated Organ: Gall Bladder

Senses: Sight (Eyes)

Element: Wood

Season: Spring



Heart ●

The Heart sound is the fire sound and activates the heart energy.

Sound: **Hawwwwww** (Mouth wide Open)

Color: Red

Emotions: Hastiness, Arrogance, Cruelty

Virtues: Joy, Honor, Sincerity

Associated Organ: Small Intestine

Senses: Tongue, Speech

Element: Fire

Season: Summer

Spleen ●

The Spleen sound is the earth sound, activating the energy of the stomach, the pancreas, and the spleen.

Sound: **Whoooooo** (From the Throat, Guttural)

Color: Yellow

Emotion: Worry

Virtues: Fairness, Openness

Associated Organs: Pancreas, Stomach

Senses: Taste (Lips, Mouth)

Element: Earth

Season: Indian Summer





Triple Warmer

The Triple Warmer sound "**Hooooooo**" (From the Throat pass through upper and lower teeth). It serves to balance the temperature of the three levels by bringing hot energy down to the lower center and cold energy up to the higher center. Specifically, hot energy from the area of the heart is moved to the colder sexual region, and cold energy from the lower abdomen is moved up to the heart's region.

 **MY HEALTH YOGA**

YIN ORGANS AND EMOTIONS ACTIVITY

Using the Advanced Yin notes, fill in the missing information below for each student.

1. **STUDENT:** 46 years old, Office worker, Sore lower back, Stressed, & Low Energy.

Organs which may be effected: _____ & _____.

2. **STUDENT:** 18 years old, lost her father at a young age. Shy, softly spoken. Admits she is bloated often and wants to try Yoga to help regulate her bowels (often constipated).

How could losing her father when she was young be linked to her current physical complaint?

3. We have 6 Yin Meridians and 6 Yang Meridians. The 12 Meridians are linked in the body like an electrical current circling continually. When a physical injury happens, what happens to the flow of energy, and which organ will this always effect?
(hint: think of how you feel when you are injured and you cannot move freely).



SELF STUDY & REFLECTION

Allow yourself to go through a self practice of Yin Yoga. It may be one pose or three or four poses. Aim for between 30 minutes and one hour. Without worrying about your answers being “wrong” or “right”, simply write down the first things that come to mind when you read these questions:

Q: What emotions (feelings, sensation) are dominant or present in my Yoga practice today:

A: PHYSICALLY _____ (Fatigue? Resistance? Pain? Freedom?)

MENTALLY _____ (Distraction? Guilt? Focus? Effort?)

Q: Link the words you wrote above to one overall emotion, sensation or memory, and using the Advanced Yin Meridian Notes and the three-step questions from this module, work out how you can experience *True Healing* to move beyond the attachment to this emotion, sensation or memory.

A: 1. What is my current state? (Awareness)

2. Can I accept 100% of this as my own doing, and my own lesson? (Acceptance)

3. What can I do immediately in the present moment to release this information and move on?
