

## MODULE 1:

### Introduction to teaching AcuYoga

AcuYoga is a term that blends together two worlds of healing – Chinese Medicine, and Yoga. These two modalities share many similarities, which make them both complimentary in theory and practice. As a school of healing, My Health Yoga has adapted a form of Asana practice that incorporates Acupressure into each pose, thereby increasing the efficacy of each Asana by utilising these remarkable Acupressure points.

As we know, Asana is a practice of physically arranging the body into sacred shapes for the purpose of balancing the flow of Prana (energy) through our physical tissues. Asana allows us to feel energy as it flows through the body's energy lines, so that we feel balanced and whole. For example, if we have a blockage of energy in a joint, or a limb, working that joint or limb with an appropriate Asana can assist with moving energy and re-establishing energy flow.

Traditionally, Asana was developed as a tool to assist with Meditation and mindfulness. Only recently has Asana been adapted as a form of 'exercise' and to assist with physical health.

From our Level 1 study, we know that Chinese Medicine is regarded as the oldest school of medicine in the history of healing. Dating back over three thousand years, Ancient Chinese Healers discovered Meridians which carried life force energy (Prana, 'Qi') through the physical body and helped balance each of our internal systems and the organs within these systems. By pressing on various special points along each Meridian, they could either increase the flow of energy (Tonify) to a point, or reduce the amount of energy (Reduce) in a point, which helped to balance each of the Meridians and thus each of the organs in the body.

Acupressure involves palpation (touch) of specific Acupoints along each of the 12 Main Meridians of Chinese Medicine plus the two extra Meridians. Some points are more commonly used than others, and similarly some points are more easily accessible or more suitable than others.

Acupuncture involves piercing the skin using a sterilised Acupuncture needle at the exact same Acupoint. Thus, the Acupoints can either be stimulated by touch (pressure) or piercing (puncture), with a similar result. Only a licensed, registered Practitioner of Chinese Medicine should perform Acupuncture. This is because the nature of needling requires many thousands of hours of study and practice to ensure it is as safe as possible for the patient. However, Acupressure is relatively safe, and is ideal for Yoga teachers, Yoga students and for people of almost all health conditions, backgrounds and needs.

Combining the benefits of physical Asana with the energy regulation of Acupressure is known as AcuYoga. My Health Yoga is excited to be one of the first Teacher Training institutes to embrace this incredible fusion of traditional healing modalities.

## **The Five Vital Substances**

There are five substances in Chinese Medicine we study in AcuYoga. These are used to describe our health, and help us create balance in Yin / Yang energy.

### **1/ Qi (energy)**

In Yoga we call it Prana, as an AcuYoga practitioner we use the term 'Qi'. Qi is sourced from the Lungs (breath Qi), Digestive system (digestive Qi) and Kidneys (pre-natal Qi). We will learn more about this in the Meridians modules coming up.

### **2/ Xue (blood)**

In TCM, Xue carries the Qi through the body. It also carries nutrients, vitamins, and Oxygen, out to the cells - and toxins back from the cells upon exhalation. Blood serves to nourish and to clean the cells.

### **3/ Jing (essence)**

Our Kidneys store an energy we refer to as Jing (Kidney Qi), which is given to us at conception. It cannot be restored or rebuilt, and is designed to last our lifetime. Therefore, the faster we burn through this essence, the faster we age. In Chinese Medicine we know that the secret to a long healthy life is to reduce stress, and reduce the rate in which we use our Jing.

#### **4. Jin Ye (Body fluids)**

Our body fluids, such as our lymph, lactic, extracellular fluid, phlegm and mucous, are designed to help release waste, circulate minerals and nutrients, and keep our immune systems strong.

#### **5. Shen (spirit/mind/consciousness)**

In Chinese Medicine, our spirit is referred to as our Shen, and this is a substance in itself. We will learn more about the Shen in the associated Meridians module.

## **The Five Principles of AcuYoga**

The history of Chinese Medicine and the philosophy of Yoga have many similarities. Whilst the terminology and specific teachings may seem to differ, it is the underlying principles that are so closely related. In essence, both Chinese Medicine and Yoga operate under the following principles, which we call the Five Principles of AcuYoga.

Five Principles of AcuYoga:

1. Blood & Qi can't be separated
2. Blood and Qi must be circulating and not stagnant
3. AcuYoga must be practiced alongside Meditation.
4. Health Is Interrelated With Our External Environment

## 5. Health is a balance of Yin Yang.

In both Yoga and Chinese Medicine philosophy, the essence of health is simply a concept of balance. The body's energy must be in balance between our internal and external environments, and within our organs, joints, nervous system, digestion, emotions, hormones and more. Yoga philosophy discusses the flow of Prana and 'life force energy', whereas Chinese Medicine discusses the flow of Qi. Since blood carries oxygen to each cell for life, and carries debris away for detoxification – plus hormones and essential minerals – blood is perhaps the most precious substance next to Qi we have.

The first principle discusses the link between these two life-sustaining substances. It is important to remember that without energy – Qi or Prana – blood could not circulate. Energy

beats our Heart which pumps blood, and energy drives our muscles, which circulates blood, for example. Also, without blood, we could not have energy movement. Thus, the first principle of AcuYoga states that Blood & Qi cannot be separated. We commonly say in Chinese Medicine that where Qi flows, Blood goes. In this way, we can help many internal problems such as pain or imbalance simply by restoring Qi flow (Asana, Acupressure) to then increase Blood flow.

Secondly, Blood and Qi must be circulating, and not stagnant. When we think of how water flows through the land to supply different villages, the water must be constantly moving to retain its freshness and purity. If we have a blockage in the river flow due to debris, or drought, the water will become murky and stale. For each village to have access to clean water, we must ensure a constant flow of the river.

It is much the same for the energy in our body, our Qi. Qi must flow through the Meridians in a constant but calm stream. Realistically, this almost never happens except during deep Meditation. AcuYoga realises the connection between using Acupressure techniques to balance Qi flow in the Meridians and the path to enlightenment, which Yoginis and Yogis endeavour to take, hence we then know with Acupressure and our knowledge of the Meridians we can hope to continue our work towards Samadhi with added tools in our tool belt.

Remember that either side of a blockage the water will be different. The same occurs in our Meridians. A blockage may exist because of an Organ problem (sickness/disease), an Emotional disruption (Grief may exhaust Lung Qi, Frustration may cause excess Liver Qi) or an injury to the physical site of the Meridian. In any case, if we have a disruption, on one side of the blockage we will have an **excess** of Qi, and on the

other we will have a **deficiency**. At the site of blockage we have **stagnation** of Qi. These three terms are used to describe any issues with Qi flow that hinders the circulation of Qi and will result in disharmony between our Organs, our Meridians, and our total Yin/Yang energy.

The third principle of AcuYoga describes the necessity for Meditation as a daily practice. This is non-negotiable for a serious Yoga or AcuYoga practitioner. Meditation may be formal or informal. Simply put, Meditation occurs when we are focusing on listening to what our body, soul or spirit has to say, rather than talking to our body/mind/spirit in a one-way conversation. How can we truly understand our body's messages if we are too busy telling our body what it needs to do?

If we practice formal Meditation, we can then realise if we are on the right path, if we are doing too much/not enough, if we are in the right place, and if we are aligned. Informal Meditation is also important as it allows us to complete tasks with minimal distraction so that we remain focussed and in the now, which will alleviate Anxiety/Overthinking.

Overthinking is currently the number one cause of all health issues in the modern world! Think of all the sickness, disease, injuries, relationship breakdowns, wars, destruction and disasters that could be avoided if all the human race simply concentrated on one task at a time and performed each daily task with love and focus on the breath, rather than existing in a constant state of 'stress', 'rush' or 'obligation'. We must listen to our inner messaging regularly so that we can adjust our activities and our life work according to the purpose of our Soul (God/Goddess energy), rather than blinding ascending our way towards the Ego's idea of a 'happy life' which is often based on external and temporary sources of fulfillment.

Start with just ten minutes of meditation each and every morning, and use this time to scan the body's Meridians and listen to the inner Soul voice. After your Meditation, practice Acupressure and Asana to regulate your Meridians according to what messaging you received during your daily Meditation.

The fourth principle of AcuYoga explains the importance of our external environment on our internal health. As My Health Yoga teachers or students, we understand the importance of the world around us and how it can affect our internal harmony. As we begin to journey inward and complete the necessary Spiritual Work for our life's purpose, we can sometimes find ourselves at the mercy of the World and this can leave us feeling powerless.

For example, often after a deep Meditation practice when our Heart space is wide open, we can leave our house and encounter a person or situation driven by anger or the desire to ‘hurt us’. Likewise, when we are enjoying a deep physical practice we can get injured, causing us to feel as if the ‘world is out to get us’. Watching the evening news can cause us to feel anxious or upset when we witness wars, famines or pain inflicted about children/animals.

As Yogis, we must understand that the entire Universe is one entity, so we do not need to ‘worry’ about what is happening in the outside world. The Universe is made up of particles that are shared between ourselves, our neighbours and the world and space around us. The more we do our inner work, the more harmony and balance will exist in the world around us. If we allow ourselves to only see the bad in people, or to get angry or frustrated when things ‘don’t go our way’, we are neglecting our inner work and allowing the Ego to enter the zone of victim mentality.

AcuYoga provides a way to continually check in with the outside world and re-harmonise the balance between external and internal. If it is stormy and rainy outside, we can use Acupressure and Asana to ensure our bodies are receiving sunny, warm energy through our Meridians. If we are noticing conflict in our workplace or personal lives, we can use Acupressure and Asana to regulate our Meridians in order to remain calm and maintain the Yin/Yang balance within. We must have awareness of the external influences, but at the same time continue to focus on our inner work in order to create outward change.

The final principle is perhaps the most important. In every part of the world, and us, we have Yin & Yang Energy - two opposing forces. We have self-love, and self hate. We have motivation and we have apathy. We have construction and destruction. Health can be difficult to achieve unless we work towards balancing Yin & Yang energy. This means we must not set our intention to change according to the Ego or external pressures of society, we must live and work in harmony with our true purpose and allow the fluctuations of Yin & Yang energy to keep us on track.

So many times we fall victim to unrealistic expectations that the world, and ourselves, put upon us. We want to start a diet so we can lose or gain weight. We want to practice Asana for hours each day so we can perfect a handstand. We want to earn extra money so we can finally buy the things that will help us feel happy or fulfilled. Rather than concentrating on what we have that we don’t want, or what we need, AcuYoga asks us to just observe the imbalance of our daily life and commit to creating more balance. We can do this each day, physically, mentally and emotionally.

For example, if you suffer from pain or anxiety, you are reliant on the medical system, on a healer, or on some other external source to solve your problem. As an AcuYoga practitioner, if you observe this state of pain or anxiety as an imbalance and relate it to your Meridians, you can then begin to work on rebalancing. Pain may be an indication that you are neglecting rest, that you are on the wrong path or that you have made mistakes in the past.

By rebalancing the affected emotions you can begin to work through the pain to release the cause. If you feel stuck in your work or personal relationship sometimes you may feel as if there is no way out. However, using AcuYoga techniques, you may find that by releasing Qi on the Large Intestine Meridian (Letting Go) and encouraging the Kidney energy to strengthen (releasing Fear), you may be able to take action and free yourself from these self-imposed, limiting relationships towards a more free and fulfilling life. It is all about balance. Work out what is full/excess, what is empty/deficient, what feels stuck/stagnant, and just do the daily work.

Don't expect miracles, just commit to daily practice and allow change to unfold according to the plan of the Universe and your own soul needs. This is the true essence of AcuYoga: maintaining balance so that you can ride the journey of enlightenment with minimal disruption.

Please ensure you watch the Module 1 video and complete the quiz with this module, as well as the suggested AcuYoga class/es on MHY TV to fully complete this module.