Yin YOGA

Teacher training 2021

What is yin?

Almost impossible to explain without Yang..

Yang qualities: heat, sun, male energy, willpower, upward movement, light, expansive, dynamic potential, expressive, external

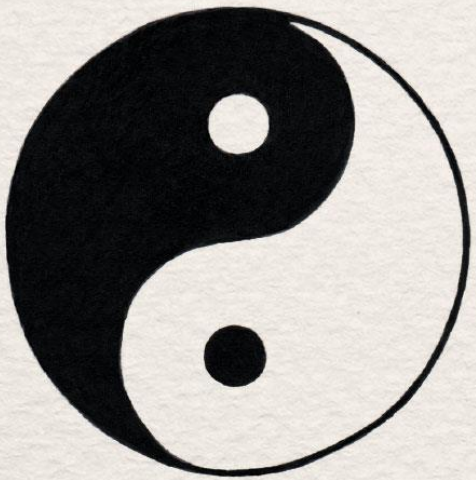
Yin qualities: coolness, moon, darkness, female energy, calm, stillness, peace, downward movement, receptive, internal, fullness, contracting, turning inward

Taoism – "the way"

The cosmic dance

Tao Te Ching - "The Way"

Yin & Yang symbol – Taj Ji



yin yang

The ancient symbol of harmony
reminds us that life is a balancing act
and most fulfilling when we learn
to embrace its dualities:
the ups & downs
good times & bad
joys & challenges

Yin in a yang-society

Yin and Yang need each other in order to maintain and co-create harmony and balance, one can not exist without the other

- Ex: after physical exercise – we need rest
- We balance our physical yoga practice – with lying in Shavasana
- After a day of activity – we need to sleep in order for our brain and body to recover our strength
- After socialising, many feel the need to be alone.

In a society where yang is favoured in forms of performance, results, external praise and reward – where is the counter balance?

Functional Anatomy

When we go to the gym or practice **yang yoga** – we **strengthen our muscles** (can also stimulates bones and our tissues)

When we practice yin – we stretch our muscles, ligaments, tissues and stimulates our bones.

The differences is that in yin – we specifically search for the tension in the body to work with it. We can locate the stiff muscles and dedicate our practice that over time can lead to more flexibility. This is more than just being flexible in order to "perform" asanas, our body need this form of stimulation in order to maintain it´s optimal wellbeing.

Three principles of practicing Yin yoga

- **1. Playing the edges**

"If you´re feeling it – you´re doing it"

In yin yoga we never have an ideal of a shape, everyone looks different practicing yin, because it´s a *functional approach to practice yoga.* We merely search for the tension in a targeted area.

- **2. Remain to be still**

Relax the muscles and area you want to stretch/stress. Tensing would be counterintuitive. Perhaps a hand or a foot needs to be active in order to maintain the position. We can move if: there is a sharp stabbing pain, or a nervpain (this is different to stretch that feels more broad and expansive)

- **3. Stay for some time**

Stillness is the magical ingredients in Yin yoga.

Yin yoga as a complementary practice to Yang:

Stretches the muscles and fascia

Supports the body´s need for movement – increase "Range of Motion"

Relaxes the nervous system

Prepare for meditation

Does not: Strengthen the muscles

Lecture 2

- Fascia
- Nervous system
- Functional yoga
- Tension/compression

Fascia

- Is all over the body, surrounding every muscles, bone & organ. It comes from Latin and means "bond" – binding all together, it is also sometimes referred to as connective tissue (there is connective tissue that isn´t fascia – ex. Blood, see the following definition)
- Definition from fascia congress in 2015: "**All collagenous fibrous tissues"**
- **Made up of**: cells ECM (extracellular matrix) which is "ground substance" and fibres (collagen, elastin etc)
- **Functions**: maintain the frame of the body, connects all tissues, protects organs, fills out the "space" between the organs and prevent friction and pressure, holds the bones together, and lies between the bones to make them slide smoothly and pain free, and creates scar tissue.
- "**Pull on the fascia, can affect the cell´s behaviour**" – Thomas Myers

Fascia & movement

Fascia facilitates movement and respond to it.

It also responds to a lack of movement.

The essential ingredient is ECM and in that substance live the cells that produce collagen – fibroblasts. These cells responds to movement, pressure, loading and friction, which keeps the environment healthy.

Without movement – the outcome is stiffness

The Sadhu - Amar Bharati

Holding his arm up for 40 years

It´s a perfect demonstration of how continued movement leads to continued ability to move and how stillness leads to stiffness.

Yin and yang in the nervous system

Stress is too much yang in the nervous system

When we experience stress - our sympathetic nervous system is activated

Also called: fight, flight & freeze

When we feel relaxed – our parasympathetic nervous system is activated

Also called: rest and digest

Yin yoga is a practice that can help the "active" nervous system to switch to the "passive" nervous system. Allowing us to feel naturally calm and experience peacefulness. This happens when we allow the body to be still for some time, through slow breathing and relaxing of our muscles.

Modern researchers states that stress isn´t dangerous in itself, but it´s dangerous to stay in stress. Learning to "step out" of stress and into relaxation is a priceless skill and necessary for the wellbeing of our bodies and minds.

Yin yoga and movement

FOCUS AREAS

In yin yoga we focus on an area of the body that we want to stretch and affect. For example we can say that we are going to focus on all the "focus areas" of the hips, we then have four different areas to look at:

Front of the thigh, back of the thigh, inside (adductors) & outside (abductors & seat muscles)

This makes anatomy a lot easier. We are not concerned with individual muscles, we look at the muscles working together – because it is almost impossible to separate them when we work them (yang), or when we stretch them (yin).

Focus areas of the hip

Front of thigh

Rectus femoris, Vastus medialis, Vastus lateralis, Vastus intermedius, Iliopsoas, Illiacus, Sartorius, Rectus femoris

Back thigh

Biceps femoris, Semimembranosus, Semitendonosus

Seat muscles and IT-band

Gluteus maximus, Gluteus medius, Gluteus minimus, Tensor fascia Latae/it-band, Piriformis, Obturator internus, Gemellus superios, Gemelius inferior, Quadratus femoris

Adductors

Pectineus, Adductors longus, Adductors brevis, Adductors magnus, Gracilis

Tension verses Compression

When practicing yoga there are two things you are going to feel – tension and sooner or later compression.

Tension: muscles stopping you and you feel a stretch. After some time of stretching you might get "a little further" in a position.

Compression: You don´t feel a stretch where the muscle could supposedly stop you and in your body two bones are hitting, stopping you from getting further. This will not change over time.

Let´s take the elbow as an example: tension or compression?

Functional Yoga

Functional approach - “I do it because it feels good”

No alignments

The body tells you where to go

Yoga for each body

Third lecture: HIPS

Pelvis – skeletal variations

Femur bone – skeletal variations

Yin yoga postures for hips and feet

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We ask ourselves in all shapes…

- Where do I feel it?
- Is it tension or compression?
- How would I potentially modify?

Fourth lecture - SPINE

FOCUS AREAS

Extension of the spine – Backbend

Flexion of the spine – Forward bend

Twist for the spine

Lateral flexion – forgot in your papers! But we will do two shapes for it ☺

Practicing 2 and 2

- Take a moment, think it through
- Guide into a focus area. Check in with your partner - where does he or she feel it? Do you need to give an alternative?
- Make all the mistakes, that´s how we learn

and that´s what we´re here for ☺

Don´t take it personal!

If a student is moving around a lot – don´t take it personal. Stay centred and remain calm.

The student might not be used to relaxation (having a nervous system in chronic stress). Simply encourage stillness, sighing, scanning through the body, or let them be. Perhaps it takes them 90 percent of the class before they find stillness.

Holding space

"The most important function of a teacher is to provide a time and place where others feel comfortable practicing their yoga. It is not necessary to be more advanced physically, mentally or spiritually"

- Paul Grilley