



YIN YOGA CONTINUING
EDUCATION WORKSHOP

WITH TRACY
CARRUTH

BRIEF HISTORY OF YIN YOGA AND WHO'S WHO

The increasing popularity of Yin Yoga can be attributed significantly to the impactful contributions of Paul Grilley and Sarah Powers. Paul Grilley, acknowledged for coining the term "yin yoga" to characterize his teachings, employs a comprehensive approach that intertwines anatomy with Chinese Taoist philosophy drawn from the teachings of his mentors, Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama and Paulie Zink.

On the other hand, Sarah Powers, a seasoned yoga instructor and Buddhist practitioner, introduced elements of mindfulness and Chinese medicine, adding a holistic perspective to the practice of Yin Yoga.

Grilley and Powers played instrumental roles in disseminating Yin Yoga through well-structured training programs, gaining widespread recognition during the latter part of the 20th century. Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama, a distinguished yoga adept holding dual PhD degrees, assumed the role of Grilley's spiritual guide in 1990. Dr. Motoyama's profound influence is discernible in the incorporation of spiritual and energetic facets into Yin Yoga, with a particular emphasis on subtle energy channels.

Dr. Motoyama's commitment extended to the establishment of institutes dedicated to advancing research and disseminating teachings, thereby enhancing the multidimensional essence of Yin Yoga as it is practiced today.

YIN YOGA THEORY

Yin Yang Theory

- Dualistic View: Embracing opposing forces
- Natural Change: A continuous process
- Yin vs Yang: Balancing opposites
- All things have Yin & Yang aspects
- Mutual dependency

Yin Characteristics

- Night, dark, cold, passive
- Still, quiet, heavy, slow
- Yielding, soft, calm
- Female energy

Yang Characteristics

- Day, bright, hot, active
- Doing, outgoing, aggressive
- Function, movement, light, fast
- Associated with fire and external energy

Fascia Qualities

- Connective tissue made of cells (fibroblasts & immune cells) and fibers (mainly collagen & elastin)
- Two main functions: Connection and Protection
- Sensory function: Contains many neurons
- Superficial, deep and visceral fascia

Factors impacting fascial health

- Physical and emotional trauma
- Overuse
- Infectious agents
- Scarring
- Inflammation
- Dehydration

YIN YOGA TECHNIQUES

1. Find 70% of your stretch capacity
2. Practice stillness
3. Move with softness (relax muscles = relax NS)
4. Cultivate mindful awareness and friendly curiosity
5. Listen to your body and notice areas of resistance
6. Use props to support and ease
7. Hydrate and rest after stretching are crucial for fascial health

The basic tenets of Yin Yoga involve taking the suggested shape of the pose while considering the limitations of your own body. It's essential to find a middle ground that is neither too neutral nor too deep, allowing for sensation without overwhelming intensity. Avoid pushing or striving to reach your edge, and refrain from comparing yourself to others.

Relaxation is key in Yin Yoga, as the practice involves releasing muscles to shift the work into the deeper connective tissues of the body. While the general approach is to become still, exceptions exist, such as in back-bending asanas or when working with injuries. Take the time to explore the optimal position for your body in a pose, and be open to adjusting based on feedback from your body.

Hold the pose for a specified time, as holding poses for an extended duration is a hallmark of Yin Yoga. Typically, poses are held for 3-5 minutes, but for beginners, a shorter duration of 1-3 minutes may be appropriate. It's also acceptable to vary the holding time based on the difficulty of the pose. While there is a movement toward stillness, absolute stillness is not always necessary or desirable. While holding poses for more than 5 minutes is possible, it's advisable to avoid exceeding 10 minutes during a class, as diminishing returns may occur beyond this duration.

COMPONENTS OF A **YIN** YOGA PRACTICE

Before Class:

- Set the right atmosphere: Dark, quiet, and supported
- Prepare your props and space

Preparation for Pose:

- How to get into the pose
- Alignment, props, and cautions
- Aim for 70% intensity, then stay, find stillness and soften

While in Pose:

- Verbal cues for orientation, sensations, effects, and meridians
- Focus on relaxation, resistance, and emotional experiences
- Notice reactions and patterns

Sequencing of Poses:

- Define your purpose
- Include counter poses
- Balance the body

LIST OF POSES

- Bridge on block
- Butterfly (both legs)
- Butterfly (one leg)
- Caterpillar
- Cat Tail (twisted root)
- Child's pose
- Cradle (joyful baby one or both legs)
- Dragon (twisted dragon)
- Dragonfly (wide angle straddle)
- Frog
- Gecko (lizard)
- Infant (locus)
- Legs up the wall
- Saddle
- Shoelace
- Sleeping Swan (deer and figure 4)
- Snail
- Sphinx
- Square pose (double pigeon or easy sit)
- Squat
- Supine moon
- Toe Stretch

Upper body:

- Pec release and/or gomukhasana
- Prone shoulders or eagle arms
- Puppy pose
- Thread the needle
- Trap release
- Supported Fish

THE ESSENCE OF YIN YOGA

Yin Yoga shares the same objectives as any other form of yoga but focuses on stimulating connective tissues, like ligaments, bones, and joints. It complements dynamic yoga practices, emphasizing internal healing and lengthening contracted muscles. Yin Yoga mainly targets the connective tissues of the hips, pelvis, and lower spine, making it suitable for all levels.



MERIDIANS TARGETED BY THE YIN POSES AND EMOTIONAL BALANCE

One of the ways to work with your yin practice is to enhance emotional equilibrium by focusing your practice on specific meridians.

Organ Pairs	Balance	Imbalance
Kidney/ Urinary Bladder	Wisdom	Fear
Liver/Gallbladder	Compassion	Anger
Spleen/Stomach	Calmness	Anxiety/Worry
Lungs/ Large Intestine	Courage	Sadness/ Grief
Heart/ Small Intestine	Love/Joy	Hate

MERIDIAN THEORY

The Meridian Theory suggests chi, the vital energy, flows through the body along specific pathways, known as meridians, providing energy to cells and organs. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and acupuncture acknowledge thousands of meridians, with main ones directing energy to major organs. Contrary to historical Western views, the importance of connective tissue is emphasized in the Taoist perspective. Qi's unimpeded flow is crucial for organ health, while blockages and stagnation, mainly in dense connective tissue around major joints, can lead to disease. This perspective underscores the significance of maintaining free-flowing qi for overall well-being.

REASONS TO PRACTICE YIN YOGA

Physically:

- **Increased Joint Pliancy:** Yin Yoga enhances flexibility and pliancy in the joints, particularly within their natural range of motion. This can contribute to improved mobility and reduced stiffness.
- **Comfort in Meditation:** The practice of Yin Yoga promotes greater ease and comfort when sitting for meditation. The emphasis on holding poses for an extended duration allows for a deep release of tension, creating a more conducive environment for meditation.
- **Complement to Active Yoga Practice:** Yin Yoga serves as a valuable complement to more active and dynamic forms of yoga. While active practices focus on muscle engagement, Yin targets connective tissues, offering a balanced and holistic approach to overall well-being.
- **Grace and Fluidity in Motion:** Regular Yin Yoga practice can lead to increased grace and fluidity in motion. By working on the deeper layers of connective tissue, the body becomes more supple, translating into smoother and more graceful movement.

Energetically:

- Energetically, Yin Yoga works to eliminate energy blocks that may lead to deficiencies and stagnation in your chi, thereby influencing your overall health.
- The practice enhances natural vitality by facilitating the absorption of chi.
- Additionally, it plays a role in harmonizing emotions, bringing you closer to your authentic self.
- In this space, overwhelming emotions find room for digestion and integration.

Mentally and Spiritually:

- Enhanced natural concentration
- Increased clarity of thought, and an
- Expanded capacity to enter a contemplative state of mind
- Allows individuals to experience deeper levels of consciousness, fostering a connection with the inner self and promoting spiritual awareness.

www.tracycarruth.com



© Tracy Carruth 2024