



# **Yin Yoga: An Energetic Journey Through the Elements**

**Carol Bailey**

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## Yin Yoga: An Energetic Journey Through the Elements

This journey is an overview of Yin Yoga, the Five Daoist Elements, Energy, and the Chinese Meridian lines. How they interact with each other and how they have dramatically changed my life over the past year.

### What is Yin Yoga?

Yin Yoga uses longer holds in shapes to create a healthy stress to the fascia which is in your muscles (around 30% of muscles is fascia), ligaments, tendons, and joint capsules. This healthy stress makes the targeted areas stronger. This can also include a stretch or increase in range of motion and flexibility to areas of the body in these shapes. While there is suggested alignment, the importance is on tuning into how your body is feeling and creating a shape that works for you. There are props to find more comfort in order to hold the pose for a longer duration of time. The key is to linger in the shape in stillness, for a given amount of time, and to let the body respond naturally. Beyond the physical benefits, it is a quiet practice, which allows for introspection, or the observation of self.

### The Five Elements



The Five Daoist Elements model first appeared around 770-476 BCE in China. The Daoists developed this from the patterns that can be easily observed in the world around us. The Elements are not separate, they have a relationship of give and take. The key is to have balance and harmony between them.

Let us take Water for example...

- Water can nourish and grow plants (Wood).
- Water can also control a fire.
- Water is controlled by Metal, which when cold, causes water to condense.
- Water is also impacted by the Earth because it soaks up the water.

The Daoists observed that these are not just in nature but within our bodies as well. Physically we suffer if we have too much fire in our body or too little water. The elements also map to our emotional state. When out of balance: Water we are fearful; Wood we are angry and frustrated; Fire we cannot sleep and have nightmares; Earth we worry and experience fatigue; and Metal we grieve.

The lovely thing about the elements is that they may have originated in Chinese medicine, but it has now been used in many other ways including philosophy, fengshui, fortune-telling, martial arts, acupuncture, Ayurveda, and yoga,

including Hatha and Yin. Even imagery in poetry, gemstones, sounds and mudras can be extended to be linked to the elements. The elements are all within us and all around us. They are easy to identify with and can be viewed from many angles. This makes them not just an interesting theme for a class but is also thought provoking on how the elements play out in our own lives. Do you feel you have too much fire and need a more calming water and earth to achieve a better balance?

Each element is associated with a Yin organ and a Yang organ. The organ names are capitalized since they represent not just the organ itself but the function of the organ as well. Example Heart means the physical heart as well as the circulation of blood flow.

### **My Personal Yin Practice & Journey**

When first introduced to Yin a few years ago, I found it boring. We just sat there in a pose for minutes on end! All that happened was my mind was able to get loud with distracting, negative and chaotic thoughts. I only wanted to silence them with distractions, either music or movement. These were comforting distractions which I found in my Vinyasa classes. In hindsight, I realize I was feeding my fire element, both at my corporate job and in the yoga studio. I was burning too hot! I was working a demanding technology program manager position and matching my life outside of work with the same intensity. No wonder I was having chronic stress related health issues! Fatigue, anxiety and even a fear of stopping what I was used to doing (even if it was damaging) ruled my internal world.

Then I made a bold move and left my corporate career, finally understanding that I was miserable. I began anew.

After taking a year off, I began my pursuit of a new life passion, yoga teaching. Everything shifted in that moment. I responded to a balance of both a flow as well as a more earthing energy in a yin yoga class. I understood that I needed to deal with and not ignore my busy mind. I spent many times in yin class quietly wiping away tears: acknowledging thoughts that were repeating, understanding they were not benefiting me as a person and slowly dissolving them away. Yin became not just something I did for a physical release but an emotional and mental one as well.

I continued teaching and learning and was in a routine with yoga. I taught at a couple different locations and my practice mainly consisted of attending studio classes.

This all changed early 2020 with the Covid-19 global pandemic. The water element sent a huge wave into life. The official shelter in place in Chicago occurred March 21, 2020. My husband and I had begun an entire house remodel project the month prior. The home was ripped in main areas down to the studs and subfloor. Our livable rooms were limited to the bedroom and one small section of the basement, which included a bathroom. All of our remaining furniture and household items stored in the rest of the basement area and other two bedrooms. The house felt tiny and we both were stuck in it 24/7. The fire of uncertainty, fear, loss all boiled up again. My main focus was around our safety, making sure we had enough groceries, that my parents were OK, even counting rolls of toilet paper. My yoga practice went on hold. I switched to recording videos (which I never did before so there was a HUGE learning curve) for my yoga students. But there was not enough time or energy for me to devote to my own practice. There was fear, anxiety, loss, and sadness for those getting ill. All of the elements were out of harmony at that point.

- Water = Fear ruled my internal world, lots of worrying and anxiety bubbled up again.
- Wood = Anger that the remodel crew had more of a run of my house than I did and frustration that I could not retreat and be safe in a studio, store, etc. For most of the time we were in lockdown in the basement. I even had resentment for those who were able to have a quiet home for their practice and who had “free time” to try different recipes and even time to teach virtually.
- Fire = Insomnia occurred frequently with nightmares. I also had deep sadness for those losing loved ones during this crisis.

- Earth = Worry and fatigue controlled me. I did not have much energy to use.
- Metal = Grief at the loss of a life that I enjoyed. Seeing family, friends, going to the gym, indoor dining, not worrying about a virus, teaching at a studio, shopping, vacations, etc.

After a couple months of no progress, the house remodel began again. Things were a new normal. My husband was working from home in the basement with me while the workmen were loud upstairs. I turned my attention to my practice. I joined Zoom sessions via Prairie Yoga and just seeing my favorite teachers helped me. I rarely made it through the entire class without needing to stop and talk to my superintendent or check on progress. However, returning to my yoga practice made me feel more like myself, more grounded. I rediscovered yin. It had the same positive effect I experienced after I left my corporate job. I could allow my fears to be acknowledged and healing tears to flow. The yin practice helped me to stay as calm as possible with stresses of the virus, a very bumpy remodel and other life tensions. At the end of 2020, our house remodel was finally complete. My husband has his own at-home office and I have my own yoga studio room. We spent a lot of time getting the house back in order. But now we can be settled and enjoy.

I knew I wanted to learn more and dive deeper. I completed an online 50-hour certification with Bernie Clark for yin and I resolved to not just teach it, but to have it always in my life.

Writing this now in March 2021, a full year later, I can honestly say that my yoga practice, particularly yin, has been essential. Today I feel more balanced with my elements than I ever thought I would be. My personal practice and teaching style has shifted for the better. I am happier, more in harmony. I understand the value of silence more than ever. In my yoga videos I give quiet time without cues. Time to settle into a shape and actually feel and notice is more important than anything I could say in those few breath cycles.

- Water = A consistent practice has reduced my fear. I focus energy more on being creative instead of on a useless spiral of fear. Being gentle and kind to myself and knowing that low energy days should be expected and respected.
- Wood = Having the remodel end helped here! But keeping myself busy with new projects including additional yoga trainings and setting up my own virtual teaching has allowed me to maintain a movement towards growing myself as a person. Journaling and expressing my emotions clearly and honestly.
- Fire = I have been sleeping better. Before bed I now have a routine of doing either a reading or relaxing in a yin pose. I also keep a dream journal to get any thoughts or nightmares on paper to see them as something to analyze and be curious about instead of something to bother me. Focusing more on joy with a gratitude journal helped as well.
- Earth = A more consistent and balanced yoga practice of both flowing and yin have provided me with more energy to reduce fatigue. I also have been using a mini trampoline and treadmill. I still worry, but in the silent moments on my mat, I acknowledge that there is only so much I can control. The only control I have are over my personal choices and reactions. Establishing a morning and evening routine with regular wake-up and sleep times has kept me more stable with my energy level. I also pause and rest in a relaxing pose daily.
- Metal = Let go of trying to make everyone happy or rationalize things. Knowing we are keeping safe in our household to the degree that we are comfortable and letting go of making others understand or change around us. Accepting that some days will just be more difficult than others. To make the best of the current situation and to let the rest go.

*"A flower, a rainbow, a tree, a blade of grass, a human body, when broken down to their essential components, are energy and information. The whole universe, in its essential nature, is the movement of energy and information. Remember that your true nature is one of pure spirit. Carry the consciousness of your spirit wherever you go, gently release your desires, and the universe will handle the details for you"*

*---Deepak Chopra*

## **Energy & Chinese Meridian Lines**

Energy is in everything, in our environment and in our body. The definition of "energy" varies depending on if you are referring to Eastern Daoist, India Philosophy or Western medicine. In many cultures you can see references. The Latin word for breath is spiritus or spirit, breath, wind. The Greek word for soul is numa or air. In India it is called Prana which is the breath and life force. In Daoism and Chinese Medicine, it is known as Qi or Chi.

In the India Philosophy of yoga, we stimulate the flow of energy and also remove blockages (granthis) to encourage the flow to run more smoothly. This in turn provides health or wholeness. This energy is of the subtle kind. Using asana (poses) and pranayama (breathing) to move the life force energy through the nadis or energy channels.

In yin yoga, the Daoist method is utilized to follow the flow of energy. These are the Chinese Meridian lines which are mapped to both physical organs and their functions. Stimulating these channels moves Qi. Note that it can be difficult to translate Qi from the Daoist view into English. There is a book by Dr. Daniel Keown "The Spark in the Machine" and he describes it as the cause of everything, the outcome of everything. Qi is always present before and after a change. Energy in this way cannot be created or destroyed, it is always present in the universe. It is a little different than Prana. Qi is a much broader concept which includes life force and much more. There are also around 32 types of Qi.

We must channel the energy for it to be useful, just like electricity feeding through wires can light up a home. One of the ways is via the Chinese Meridian lines or "Jing-luo" which can be translated to mean "to go through" or "that which connects". These energy channels are not imaginary lines in the body, they are real. The scientific mapping of the fascia boundaries of the major muscle groups very closely matches the meridian lines. There are 12 main meridians and 8 minor lines. They are divided this way to make it easier to discuss them with more detail, however, it is literally just one long winding line. These maps then can be used to stimulate the flow of energy throughout the body and remove blockages.

## Stimulating Energy with Yin Yoga

Now that we have a brief definition of energy and its channels or meridian lines, how does it “flow”?

The yin practice targets fascia or tissues in the body. Utilizing specific poses or shapes in order to access the energy channels. I find this similar to mudras where you hold a certain shape with your hand(s) to direct energy in a certain way to gain a desired result. Yin is like holding a full body mudra. Yin targets the lower body which consists of 6 of the main meridian lines from navel down to the feet. The important piece is that this fascia is bio-electrically conducting due to the amount of water it contains. (termed piezoelectricity) The practice utilizes acupressure with compression and releasing of targeted areas of the body. The term used for the body’s energy movement via acupressure is called piezoelectric communication.

*“All yoga practices stress our tissues, and this pressure creates piezoelectric current. These currents send information through our tissues and communicate what is happening so that proper cellular responses can occur. These currents also create magnetic fields, which can also trigger healing responses. As we stretch, twist and compress our muscles and connective tissues we are energetically turning ourselves on, literally.”*

---Bernie Clark

Coffee break time...we need to define fascia a bit more...

- Just for fun, here is the official definition a committee of experts wrote in 2017. Note this definition still is being debated today. Especially since it does not site bones which can be thought of as a continuation of the fascia system. The term fascia is from Latin meaning band or bandage.
  - “The fascial system consists of the three-dimensional continuum of soft, collagen containing, loose and dense fibrous connective tissues that permeate the body. It incorporates elements such as adipose tissue, adventitia and neurovascular sheaths, aponeuroses, deep and superficial fasciae, epineurium, joint capsules, ligaments, membranes, meninges, myofascial expansions, periosteum, retinacular, septa, tendons, visceral fasciae, and all the intramuscular and intermuscular connective tissues including endo-/peri-/epimysium. The fascial system interpenetrates and surrounds all organs, muscles, bones and nerve fibers, endowing the body with a functional structure, and providing an environment that enables all body systems to operate in an integrated manner” (S. Adstrum, G. Hedley, R. Schleip, C. Stecco and C.A. Yucesoy “Defining the Fascial System” A Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies)
- For our purposes, we will utilize Bernie Clark’s book as a guide and denote fascia as the physical linking in the body. It surrounds and is within all of the muscles and organs and is the organic fabric of the ligaments, tendons, and joint capsules.

So just like flipping a light switch in your home to turn on a light, yin uses a certain shape and healthy stress to target areas, to send bio-electrical currents through the fascial lines. These lines match very closely to the meridian lines which link to the organs and their functions. These also map to the five elements which are in everything.

*The remaining sections detail out the meridian lines and their associated element. Also included is a practice which covers the poses which map to the five elements. Note when “inner leg line” is mentioned in the practice, this targets the following three meridian lines = Water/Kidneys, Wood/Liver & Earth/Spleen.*

# Water Element & Kidney Meridian

**Overview** = The Kidneys stores and supplies “Jing” or essence to all of the organs. The Kidneys control water: sending clear healthy water upward to circulate in the body and reversely sends waters downward for elimination. Provides digestive fire for the Spleen and warmth to the Heart. The organs themselves are the last stop for filtration and detoxification of body fluids.

- Responsible for determination, creativity, willpower, energy, memory, self-worth, trust, belonging, courage
- Out of balance = Low creativity and fear. Knee, low back or joint pain. Hair loss. Ear issues.
- Balancing activities = Relaxing, moderation, respecting energy level, being gentle to yourself

**Associated Yang Organ** = Urinary Bladder

## Yin Poses

- Inner leg line
  - Release = Butterfly, Straddle, Frog
  - Compression = Shoelace
- Low Back
  - Release = Forward Folds (Caterpillar, Butterfly, Straddle) & Bridge
  - Compression = Backbends (Sphinx, Seal, Reclined Saddle)
- Upper chest
  - Release = Supported fish
  - Compression = Forward Folds

## Interactions with other elements

- Metal carries water
- Water feeds wood
- Earth absorbs water
- Water quenches fire

**Taste** = Salty

**Sensory Organ(s)** = Ears/Hearing

## Sound

- “yu” note; sound of winter and nourishes Kidney yin and reduces Lung fire
- A in Western musical notation

## Gemstones

- Eastern Stones = Black and Blue; Melanite, spinel, lapis lazuli, aquamarine, topaz, chalcedony and tanzanite
- Western Stones = Blue, green aqua and teal; Topaz, aquamarine, turquoise, emerald, opal and coral

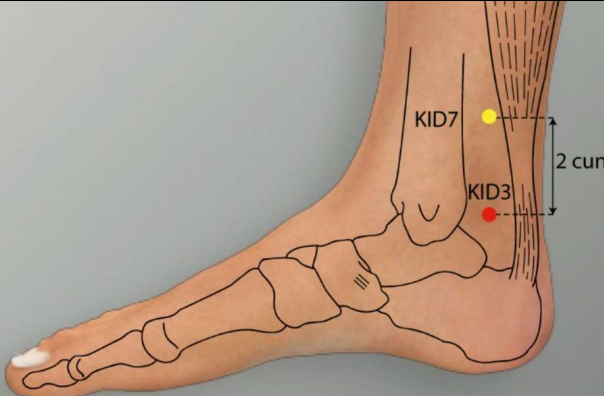
## Astrology

- Planet = Saturn
- Heavenly Creature = Black Tortoise
- Virtue = Wisdom

- Represents = Aptitude, brightness, agile mind, mental strength
- Chinese Zodiac = Rat (yang sign) and Pig (yin sign)

## Fengshui

- Planet = Mercury
- Heavenly Creature = Black Tortoise
- Direction = North
- Season = Winter
- Climate = Cold
- Color = Black
- Shape = Undulating

<p>Acupressure = Kidney 3, Taixi or Great Ravine. Stimulating this point can provide beneficial changes to mood and energy levels. It also helps low back pain.</p> <p>Location is on the inside of the ankle joint, just behind and above it.</p>	
<p>Kidney</p>	<p>Begins on the outside of little toe around to the sole of the foot.</p> <p>Travels up the inner ankle and continues up the inner (medial) leg line (just beneath the Liver meridian).</p> <p>Traces through the Tailbone/Sacrum and Kidneys.</p> <p>Two branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Urinary bladder – surface of abdomen and up the chest, ending at the clavicle.</li> <li>2) Liver and diaphragm to the lungs and throat, ending at the root of the tongue.</li> </ol>
<p>Urinary Bladder</p>	<p>Begins at the inner eye.</p> <p>Travels up the forehead to the crown of the head.</p> <p>Two branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Enters the brain, down to the scapula and runs down the spine to the buttocks. Then to urinary bladder and kidneys.</li> <li>2) Down the back of the neck and shoulder and runs parallel to the first branch on the other side of the spine. Down the back to the buttocks and legs and circles the outer ankle to outer edge of foot and ends at small toe.</li> </ol>



# Wood Element & Liver Meridian

**Overview** = The Liver is the home of the Shen or soul. It is associated with the capacity to look forward, plan and make decisions. Associated with growth and expansion. While the heart governs blood flow, the Liver is what stores and releases it.

- Responsible for planning and oversees our path in life. It also relates to our emotions, new ideas or projects, planning, organization, growth, movement.
- Out of balance = Too much anger, frustration, and resentment. Or inability to express anger. Lower back or abdominal pain. Yellow eyes (jaundice). Tendon weakness. Knee pain.
- Balancing activities = Regular bedtime, leafy greens, expressing emotions clearly

**Associated Yang Organ** = Gallbladder

## Yin Poses

- Inner leg line (same as Water/Kidney)
- Side Body = (This is associated with the yang organ of the Gallbladder)
  - Release & Compression = When releasing one side of the body in a twist or lateral stretch, the other side is compressed. (Spinal twists, Bananasana)

## Interactions with other elements

- Wood fuels fire
- Water feeds wood
- Metal penetrates wood
- Wood separates earth

**Taste** = Sour

**Sensory Organ(s)** = Eyes

## Sound

- “jiao” note; sound of Spring and influences Liver
- E in Western musical notation

## Gemstones

- Eastern Stones = Green, aqua, purple; Aquamarine, amethyst, tanzanite, iolite, tourmaline and sapphire

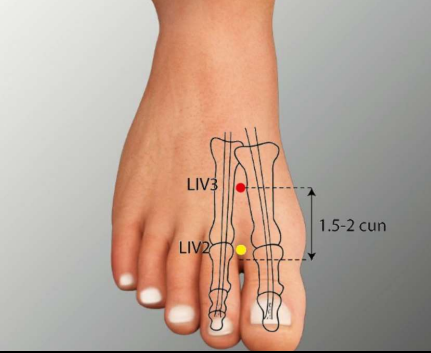
## Astrology

- Planet = Venus
- Heavenly Creature = Azure Dragon
- Virtue = Benevolence
- Represents = Creativity, luxuriance, blooming and flourishing
- Chinese Zodiac = Tiger (yang), Rabbit (yin)

## Fengshui

- Planet = Jupiter

- Heavenly Creature = Green Dragon
- Direction = East
- Season = Spring
- Climate = Windy
- Color = Green
- Shape = Rectangular

<p>Acupressure Point = Liver 3 or Taichong “Great Surge”. Helps headaches, muscle tension/cramps and restlessness.</p> <p>On the top of the foot between the tendons of the big toe and second toe. Trace up the foot towards the arch bone.</p>	
<p>Liver</p>	<p>Begins at the inner edge (medial) of the nail of the big toe. Travels along the top of the foot and up the front of the ankle. Up the inside (medial) leg line (just beneath Spleen meridian) to the pubic area. Reaches the lower abdomen and enters the liver and gall bladder.</p> <p>Two branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Connects to Lung meridian.</li> <li>2) Follows up to throat and connects with the eyes. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Two sub-branches generated... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Goes down across the cheeks and circles the lips.</li> <li>ii. Up across the forehead to the crown of the head where it links with the Governor Vessel meridian.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p>Gallbladder</p>	<p>Begins at the outer corner of the eye (close to Liver meridian).</p> <p>Two branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Winds back and forth across the side of the head and above the ear and then heads downward along the side of the neck. Top of the shoulder, under the arm and zigzags along sides of the ribs to the front of the hips.</li> <li>2) Inside of the cheek to the liver and gall bladder. Joins the first branch at the front of the hip (forming single line again).</li> </ol> <p>This single line then travels down the outside (lateral) thigh, towards the knee and then to the ankle.</p> <p>Reaches the top of the foot.</p> <p>Two branches form again...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ends at fourth toe.</li> <li>2) Ends at big toe (aka the Liver meridian).</li> </ol>

# Fire Element & Heart Meridian

**Overview** = The Heart is the emperor of all of the other organs and the entire being (physical, mental, emotional, and subtle). Heart houses our mental activities and circulation of blood. In Chinese medicine, the mind (thoughts and perception) both reside in the heart, not the brain. It also controls sleep and speech.

- Responsible for acceptance, joy, love for self and others, emotions, thoughts/intelligence.
- Out of balance = Insomnia, nightmares, sadness, heart palpitations, talking incessantly or inappropriately. Problems with the tongue, face, and complexion.
- Balancing activities = Meditation, self-reflection, journaling, dream recall, gentle movements

**Associated Yang Organ** = Small Intestine

## Yin Poses

- Chest, armpit and arms
  - Release = Supported Fish, Arms overhead in reclined position (example bridge pose)
  - Compression = Eagle arms in any seated pose, Thread the Needle

## Interactions with other elements

- Wood fuels fire
- Fire forms earth
- Fire melts metal
- Water quenches fire

**Taste** = Bitter

**Sensory Organ(s)** = Tongue

## Sound

- “zhi” note; sound of Summer and influences the Heart, invigorates blood flow
- G in Western musical notation

## Gemstones

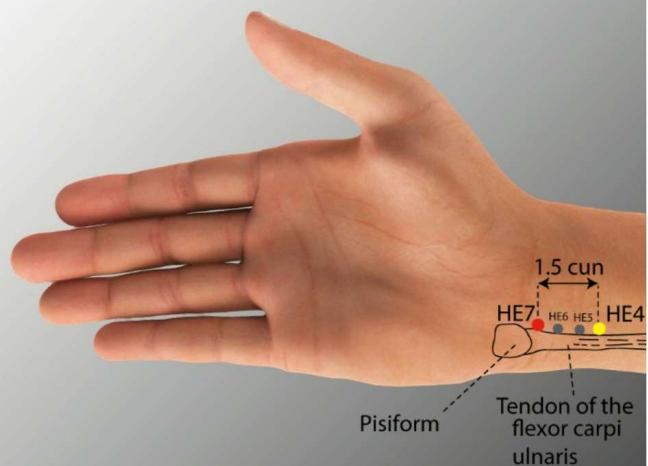
- Eastern Stones = Red, yellow, orange; Imperial topaz, spinel, ruby, citrine, opal, amber, sphalerite
- Western Stones = Red, yellow, orange; Imperial topaz, amber, fire opal, red spinel, red garnet, ruby

## Astrology

- Planet = Jupiter
- Heavenly Creature = Vermilion Bird
- Virtue = Propriety
- Represents = Enthusiasm and passion
- Chinese Zodiac = Horse (yang), Snake (yin)

## Fengshui

- Planet = Mars
- Heavenly Creature = Vermilion Bird
- Direction = South
- Season = Summer
- Climate = Hot
- Color = Red
- Shape = Angular

<p>Acupressure Point = Heart 7 or Shen Men (Spirit Door). Massaging this point activating the heart meridian line – relieves anxiety, insomnia, calms the mind.</p> <p>Inside of wrist near the crease on the little finger side.</p>	
<p>Heart</p>	<p>Start at the Heart in the center of the chest and trace a line to the top of the armpit.</p> <p>Travel down the inside of the arm. It crosses over the palm of the hand and to the little finger.</p>
<p>Small Intestine</p>	<p>Begins at the medial tip of the little finger and runs upward on the arm on the posterior side.</p> <p>Reaches the back of the shoulder next to the scapula and the back of the neck.</p> <p>Three branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Runs internally to the heart, then the stomach ends at the small intestine.</li> <li>2) Runs externally across the neck to the cheek and towards the outer corner of the eye and then enters the ear.</li> <li>3) Crosses to the cheek and then the inner corner of the eye, connecting to the bladder meridian.</li> </ol>

# Earth Element & Spleen Meridian

**Overview** = The Spleen's roles are digestion and distribution of nutrients. It transforms food, liquids, and thoughts into energy for the body (aka digestion). It has a primary role in the body's lymphatic and immune systems. It recognizes foreign invaders, removes old red blood cells and produces/stores white blood cells. Contains our thoughts and "Yi" (our intentions).

- Responsible for sharp thinking, memory, intelligence, determination, and intention.
- Out of balance = Worry, confusion, indigestion, stomach issues, fatigue. Issues seen in lips and mouth.
- Balancing activities = Warm food, regular mealtimes, daily routine, take a break and do nothing/rest.

**Associated Yang Organ** = Stomach

## Yin Poses

- Inner leg line (same as Water/Kidney)
- Quads
  - Release = Back leg of Dragon and Swan, Saddle
- Stomach
  - Release = Backbends (Sphinx, Seal, Bridge)
  - Compression = Forward Folds

## Interactions with other elements

- Fire forms earth
- Earth contains metal
- Wood separates earth
- Earth absorbs water

**Taste** = Sweet

**Sensory Organ(s)** = Mouth

## Sound

- "gong" note; sound of late Summer and strengthens the Spleen
- C in Western musical notation

## Gemstones

- Eastern Stones = Yellow, brown, green; Sapphire, zircon, quartz, beryl, tiger's eye, peridot
- Western Stones = Black, green, brown; Malachite, obsidian, jasper, all jade

## Astrology

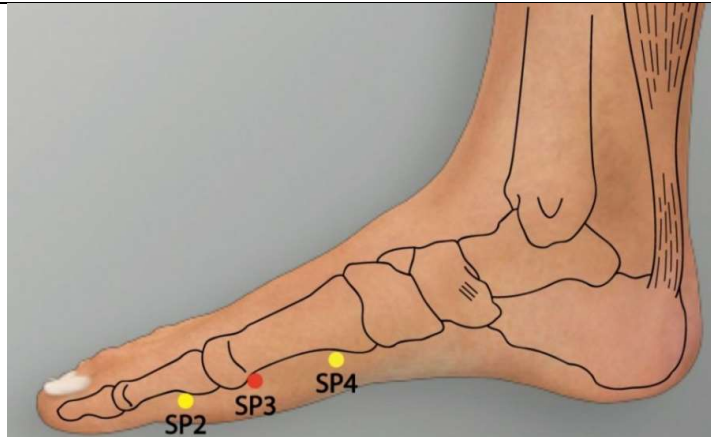
- Planet = Mercury
- Heavenly Creature = Yellow Dragon
- Virtue = Fidelity, honesty
- Represents = Nurturing, stability and security
- Chinese Zodiac = Dragon/Dog (yang), Ox/Sheep (yin)

## Fengshui

- Planet = Saturn
- Heavenly Creature = Yellow Dragon
- Direction = Center
- Season = Change of season, last month of each season
- Climate = Damp
- Color = Yellow, Brown
- Shape = Square

Acupressure Point = Acupressure source point is Spleen 3 called Taibai meaning Great White. Massaging this point regulates the Spleen and Stomach. Relieves congestion either in stomach or in mind. Improves energy level.

Big toe side or inner edge of foot (medial side). Locate the bony protuberance on the side of the foot. Then drag your finger towards your heel just below the round bony spot. Massage the point here.



### Spleen

Begins inside of the big toe.  
Travels towards the inner edge of the foot to the inner ankle and continues up the inner leg line.  
It runs in front of the Liver meridian line and enters the abdominal cavity just above the pubic bone. It then connects to spleen and stomach.

Two branches form...

- 1) Runs up the chest to the throat and then ends at the root of the tongue.
- 2) Connects to heart and Heart meridian line.

### Stomach

Begins at inner corner of the eye (connects to Urinary Bladder).

Runs down the side of the nose, reaches the upper gum, the outer lips, the lower jaw and reaches the joint of the jaw.

Three branches form...

- 1) Up to the front of the ear and ends at the forehead.
- 2) Runs internally down to the diaphragm, stomach, and spleen. Connects with the 3<sup>rd</sup> branch and runs down the front of the leg to the top of the foot.
  - a. Three sub-branches generated...
    - i. Ends on the outside tip of second toe.
    - ii. Ends on the inner side of big toe where it meets the Spleen meridian line.
    - iii. Ends on the lateral side of third toe.
- 3) Lower jaw and runs across the chest and belly and ends in the groin. Joins the 2<sup>nd</sup> branch going down the front of the leg to the top of the foot.

# Metal Element & Lung Meridian

**Overview** = The Lungs are known as the “Minister of Heaven” since they establish the foundation of Qi or energy for the entire body. The Lungs regulate Qi that we absorb from the world around us and distributes it into the body. It also eliminates stale Qi. Controls breathing, distributes oxygen in the blood and helps to circulate the blood.

- Responsible for feeling determined, strong, forceful, and self-reliant.
- Out of balance = Grief, self-rejection, shortness of breath, cough, asthma, lack of sense of smell. Skin or body hair issues.
- Balancing activities = Hydration, clean air. Ability to let go, release and surrender. Accept, receive, and respond to what is around us.

**Associated Yang Organ** = Large Intestines

## Yin Poses

- Chest, armpit, and arms (same as Fire/Heart)
- Upper chest
  - Release = Backbends
  - Compression = Forward Folds
- Upper back
  - Release = Bow tie arms, Thread the needle, Eagle arms
  - Compression = Broken wing

## Interactions with other elements

- Earth contains metal
- Metal carries water
- Fire melts metal
- Metal penetrates wood

**Taste** = Spicy

**Sensory Organ(s)** = Nose

## Sound

- “shang” note; sound of autumn and protects/nourishes Lung yin.
- D in Western musical notation

## Gemstones

- Eastern Stones = Metallic, white, gray; Hematite, pyrite, cat’s eye, moonstone, and sillimanite

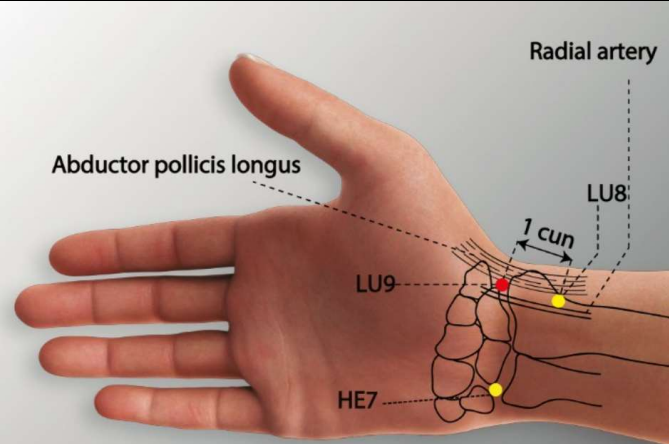
## Astrology

- Planet = Mars
- Heavenly Creature = White Tiger
- Virtue = Righteousness
- Represents = Ambition, determination, progress, and persistence
- Chinese Zodiac = Rooster (yin) and Monkey (yang)





## Fengshui




- Planet = Venus
- Heavenly Creature = White Tiger
- Direction = West
- Season = Autumn
- Climate = Dry
- Color = White
- Shape = Round



<p>Acupressure Point = Lung 9 or Tai Yuan</p> <p>Location is the thumb side of the inner wrist near the crease.</p>	
<p>Lung</p>	<p>Begins at lungs and large intestines and runs up the chest to the collarbones.</p> <p>Under the clavicle in a hollow area near the front of the shoulder called the delto-pectoral triangle.</p> <p>Runs down the inside of the arm to the wrist crease near the base of the thumb.</p> <p>Travels down the edge of thumb to the outer thumbnail.</p>
<p>Large Intestines</p>	<p>Starts at the tip of the index finger and runs between the thumb and index finger.</p> <p>Runs on the lateral side of the forearm and the anterior side of the upper arm to the shoulder.</p> <p>Two branches form...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Internally towards the lungs, diaphragm, and large intestine.</li> <li>2) Externally upwards where it passes the neck and cheek and enters the lower teeth and gums. Curves around the upper lip and crosses to the opposite side of the nose.</li> </ol>




## Five Elements Yin Yoga Practice

Yin Pose	Meridians (Either compress or release area)	Suggested Props	Hold Time	Photo
Centering with Visual Alternate Nostril Breathing and Hakini Mudra		Sit on bolster or blankets.	2 minutes	
Toe Squat	The soles of the feet are where many channels both begin and end.  Including the six lines of the lower body meridians.	Blanket or bolster under knees.  When you need a break, come to kneeling position and release feet.	2 minutes	
Tap out tops of feet & ankle movements	Counterpose		1 minute	



Sphinx	Water/Kidney (compress low back)  Earth/Spleen (release front of stomach)	Block support under forehead.  Bolster or blanket under upper chest.	3 minutes	
Half Frog	Counterpose		30 seconds	
Sphinx / Seal			2 minutes  (optional Seal pose during final minute)	
Half Frog other side	Counterpose		30 seconds	


Child's Pose	<p>Fire/Heart (release upper back)</p> <p>Water/Kidney (release low back, opposite of sphinx)</p>	<p>Bolster under chest for support.</p> <p>Blanket under head and knees.</p>	<p>2 minutes</p> <p>(halfway turn head)</p>	
Release legs	Counterpose		1 minute	
Saddle with chair support for arms overhead	<p>Fire/Heart &amp; Metal/Lungs (release upper torso, armpits, shoulders)</p> <p>Acupressure points on inner wrist for Heart (little finger side) and Lungs (thumb side)</p>	<p>Sit on bolster.</p> <p>Pad metal chair seat and front edge with blanket.</p> <p>2 Blocks and blanket on chair seat for head support.</p>	3 minutes	
Release legs	Counterpose		1 minute	

Half Shoelace	<p>Compress inner leg line.</p> <p>Acupressure point Liver 3 aka "Great Surge" on top of foot.</p>		<p>2 minutes</p> <p>(spinal twist during final minute)</p>	
Half Shoelace other side			2 minutes	

<p>Straddle</p>	<p>Release inner leg line.</p> <p>Water/Kidney (release low back)</p> <p>Earth/Spleen (compress stomach)</p>	<p>Sit on bolster or blanket.</p> <p>Blocks for under knees.</p> <p>Chair with blankets to support forehead.</p>	<p>4 minutes</p>	
<p>High-flying Dragon</p>	<p>Earth/Spleen (release back leg's quad)</p>	<p>Chair support for forearms (pad with blanket).</p> <p>Blanket or bolster under back knee.</p>	<p>2 minutes</p>	



Sit on heels between sides	Counterpose		30 seconds	
High-flying Dragon other side			2 minutes	
Supported Fish with Reclined Butterfly legs	Fire/Heart & Metal/Lungs (release upper torso, armpits, shoulders)  Release inner leg line.	Create angled bolster using blocks with blanket for head support.  Wrap blanket around feet to hold legs in place.	5 minutes	
Side-lying Bananasana	Fire/Heart & Metal/Lungs (arm overhead release shoulder)  Wood/Gallbladder (release side body)	Bolster under side ribs.  Block/blanket under head and top hand.	2 minutes	
Side-lying Bananasana other side			2 minutes	

Instant Maui Savasana		<p>Chair with blanket to cover seat and front edge.</p> <p>Blanket under pelvis.</p>	4 minutes	 <p>A photograph showing a person lying in a white folding chair, performing the Instant Maui Savasana. The person is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and dark blue leggings. Their legs are extended straight out, resting on a folded yellow blanket that covers the chair's seat and front edge. Another folded yellow blanket is placed under their pelvis. The person's arms are resting on a blue yoga mat on the floor, and their head is also on the mat. The background consists of white paneled doors.</p>
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## Resources

### Meridian Line with Associated Element Details

- <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-zodiac/china-five-elements-philosophy.htm#history>
- <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/astrology/five-elements.htm>
- [https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese Customs/five elements.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/five_elements.htm)
- <https://www.edgемagazine.net/2014/08/musical-therapy-in-chinese-medicine/>
- <https://www.gemselect.com/english/help/newsletter/newsletter-apr-13.php>
- <https://fiveseasonsmedicine.com/category/meridians/>

### Images Used

- <https://acumeridianpoints.com/> (images of acupressure points)
- <https://yinyoga.com/yinsights/the-five-daoist-elements/> (image of 5 element relationship)

### Training

- Yin Yoga 50-hr training and certification by Bernie Clark
- Book Yin Yoga by Bernie Clark
- <https://yinyoga.com/>

### Other resources

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310473391 Defining the fascial system](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310473391_Defining_the_fascial_system)
- <https://www.tcmworld.org/what-is-tcm/meridian-connection/>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2005290110600143>
- <https://naturalhealthcourses.com/2018/08/energy-flow-understanding-the-bodys-meridian-lines/>
- <https://www.amcollege.edu/blog/what-are-meridians-in-traditional-chinese-medicine-tcm>
- <https://www.wildkatyoga.com/blog/2019/10/21/yin-yoga-and-meridian-theory#:~:text=Chinese%20medicine%20uses%20certain%20yoga,primarily%20practised%20for%20organ%20health.>
- <https://www.ekhartyoga.com/articles/wellbeing/introduction-to-meridian-theory-and-yin-yoga>
- <https://www.ekhartyoga.com/articles/practice/what-is-vinyasa-krama>
- <https://www.yogagati.com/meridians-and-yin-yoga/>
- <https://upliftconnect.com/the-science-of-yin-yoga/>
- <https://upliftconnect.com/science-proves-meridians-exist/>
- <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/yin-yoga-sequence>
- <https://www.msy.yoga/what-is-meridian-systems-yoga/>
- <https://withinyouyoga.com/>
- <https://jenniferraye.com/>
- <https://www.annieauyoga.com/library/2017/2/13/liver-meridian-3-yin-poses-to-a-happier-you>
- <https://nancynelsonyoga.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/greek/5590.htm>
- <https://www.dailywritings.com/the-latin-word-for-breathe-inspired-many-english-terms/>
- <http://qi-encyclopedia.com/?article=Scientifically-Seeing-Qi>