


CREATING WELLNESS

YIN YOGA
POSES
HANDBOOK

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What is Yin Yoga

I am delighted that you are here and that you have decided to join me on this journey. My motivation for starting this yin yoga class is to encourage anyone who has never tried Yin yoga to give it a try. Why? Because, in a nutshell, the sensation you get after practising Yin yoga is incredible! Your body will feel stretched in every direction, and you will leave the class feeling completely relaxed.

If the yoga you're used to is of the flowing, sweating variety, then you're missing out. Yoga also has a calm, introverted, and introspective element to it. It's the Yin to the Yang of yoga... literally. While it is the gentler side of yoga, don't let that deceive you into believing it isn't just as demanding as Vinyasa, Bikram, or Ashtanga. It's just that the challenge is of an entirely different nature. It's the kind of challenge that asks you to be completely still, while stretching the boundaries of your capacity and melt into a long hold yoga pose. Many Yin yoga poses have their Yang counterparts, meaning they look similar to poses performed in more active styles of yoga.

What are the general benefits of yin yoga?

From a physical standpoint, the fascia—the deep connective tissues that fit like a sleeve around muscle groups and individual muscles—is often the focus of postures and breathwork. Yin yoga also focuses on connective tissues like tendons and ligaments which work so hard to support and stabilise muscles and joints.

Connective tissues, on the other hand, lose elasticity when they are underutilised (as is the case if you live a mostly sedentary lifestyle) or as a natural by-product of ageing. Physically, this can manifest as stiffness, achy joints, or restricted joint motion. Yin yoga attempts to train muscle fascia to become more flexible and ligaments that support joints to become stronger by progressively loading various types of connective tissues with weight and holding extended poses. This allows the muscles to lengthen, and the joints to enjoy an increased range of mobility during your daily movements. Yin Yoga is also beneficial for blood circulation, improved sleep, calming and balancing the body and mind, allowing for deeper relaxation.

Who is yin yoga for:

The beauty of yin yoga is anybody can do it and at any age. Once you start you will use yoga blocks, blankets and straps to aid you to sink into the poses. Using props to support your body allows you to relax, breathe into the stretch, and let gravity do its thing. As you gain flexibility in each pose, you will be able to eliminate the use of some of the props.

What does a Yin yoga class involve?

- Commences with a short breathing exercise to calm the body
- Some simple warm up stretches
- Yin Yoga poses
- 5-minute meditation at the end.

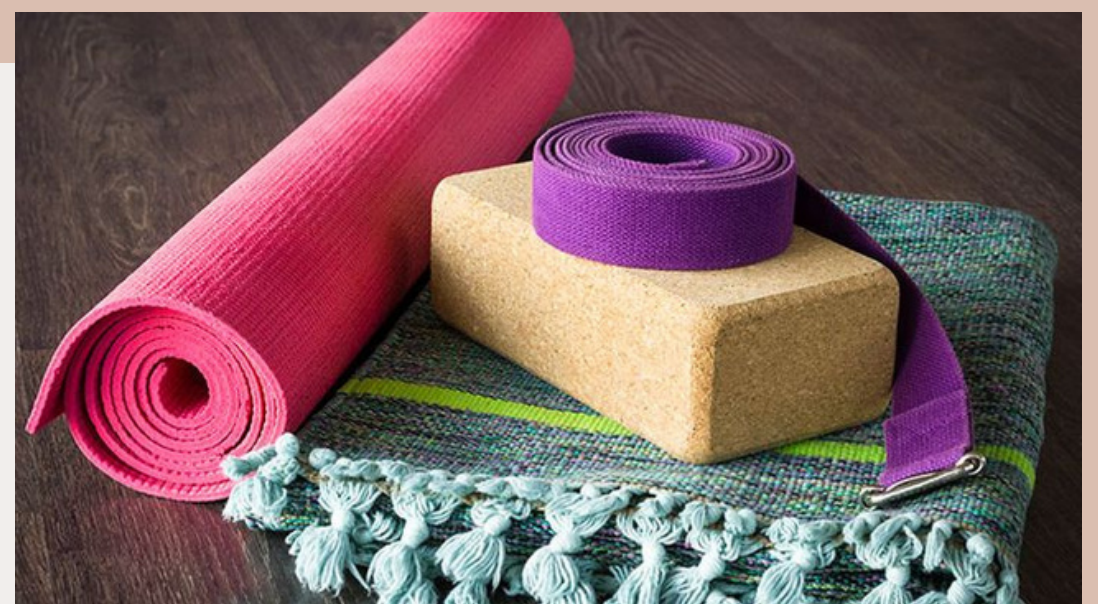
Tips for practising Yin yoga

- Find your appropriate edge (your maximum stretch). Enter the pose slowly and gently. Don't go all the way to your "maximum" in the pose, and never stretch so far that it causes pain.
- Stillness: consciously try to enter the pose with your breath. Deeply inhale and exhale while remaining still.
- Use yoga props as needed to hold the pose more comfortably and for a longer period of time. Hold the position: Begin by holding a pose for 1-3 minutes and gradually increase to 5 minutes or more.



What equipment you will need to start:

- **A Yoga Mat**
- **Blocks - they are used to support your body during a pose**
- **Blanket or rolled up towel - to provide extra padding when needed**
- **Straps - these help you extend your reach**



Basic Yin Yoga Poses

Ankle Stretch 1-3 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches ankles and tops of feet
- Strengthens ankles

Variations

- This pose can also be done without raising knees off the floor

Bananasana 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches the whole side of the body
- Works the spine in a side bend from the thigh to the ribcage

Variations

- Try crossing the ankles and raising the arms higher

Butterfly 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches lower spine, hips, inner thighs and groin
- Increases hip mobility

Variations

- Reset a bolster under the chest for more support
- To intensify the pose, stretch forward to the side instead of straight in front.

Camel 1-2 minutes



Benefits

- Opens chest and shoulders
- Deeply arches the lumbar spine and opens the top of the thighs
- Stretches thighs, hip flexors and entire front body

Variations

- Place blocks to the outside of the ankles to rest the hands on

Caterpillar 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches front and back of the legs
- Stretches muscles and ligaments around the spine and lower back
- Digestive organs are compressed aiding digestion and relieving trapped gas

Variations

- For more intensity, gently part legs and place chest between legs

Cat Pulling Its Tail 2-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches quads, chest and ankles
- Mildly compresses lower back

Variations

- Recline and look over the shoulder towards the bottom right foot

Child's Pose 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Gently stretches spine
- Gently compresses stomach organs, aiding digestion
- Stretches lower body, including ankle

Variations

- Legs can be together or apart

Dangling 2-3 minutes



Benefits

- Decompresses the spine and shoulders
- Releases hamstrings
- Stretches lower spine
- Compresses stomach, aiding digestion

Variations

- For the more flexible, holding wrists behind the legs

Deer 2-3 minutes



Benefits

- Externally and internally rotates hips
- Increases hip mobility
- Improves digestion and relieves gas

Variations

- Fold down onto a bolster beside your body

Dragon 2-3 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches psoas, hip flexors, quads, hip and groin

Variations

- Rest hands on front thigh and lift chest (Dragon Flying High)
- Place both of the hands to the inside of the front foot, walk hands forward, lowering hips – (Dragon Flying Low)
- Gently push the front knee to the side, rotate the chest to the side and roll onto the outside edge of your foot – (Twisted Dragon)

Dragonfly 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Lengthens back of the body
- Stretches hamstrings, hips, knees and inner thighs

Variations

- Bend the knees, this is a good variation for those with a low range of motion

Frog 2-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches hips and groin
- Stretches inner thighs
- Stimulates digestion

Variations

- Bring your feet together and lift hips higher

Half Butterfly 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches lower back,
- Decompresses spine
- Elongates spinal muscles, hamstrings and glutes

Variations

- Place the foot of the bent knee in Hero Pose, folded backward behind the buttock

Happy Baby 3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Deep Hip opener

Variations

- You can hold the backs of the thighs or the ankles instead of the feet if hips are tight
- Hold one foot at a time

Melting Heart 2-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches shoulders and increases shoulder mobility
- A gentle backbend for the upper and middle back

Variations

- For the more flexible, bring the chin to the floor

Saddle

3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches quads, hip flexors, tops of feet, ankles and thighs
- Increases hip mobility

Variations

- Straighten one leg for half saddle
- Bend the straightened leg and place the foot on the floor, deepen this variation by hugging this knee into the chest

Seal

3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches and tones spine and muscles in the back
- Stretches stomach
- Restores natural curvature to the lumbar spine

Variations

- Keep the forearms on the ground for a gentler stretch - Sphinx Pose
- Spread the legs apart to deepen the sensations in the lower back

Shoelace

3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Great hip opener and increases hip mobility
- Provides a unique stretch through internal hip rotation Decompresses lower spine if you fold forward

Variations

- Fold forward over the legs, let the chin drop towards the chest

Snail

1-2 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches spine and neck
- Brings more blood flow to the head
- Compresses internal organs

Variations

- Bend the knees around the ears

Squat

2-3 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches hips
- Lengthens and releases lower back
- Strengthens ankles

Variations

- If heels are off the floor try taking the feet wider
- Keep the feet together and knees wide apart

Supine Twist

3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Massages stomach organs
- Stretches waist, spine and back muscles
- Aids digestion

Variations

- Extend one or both legs
- Cross knees into eagle pose legs

Swan

3-5 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches hips, knees, quads and groin

Variations

- Fold forward onto the floor or onto a bolster - Sleeping Swan

Toe Squat 2-3 minutes



Benefits

- Stretches toes and feet
- Strengthens ankles

Variations

- Bring hands behind you and lean back for a deeper stretch

Most commonly asked questions.

What should I think about while I hold a pose?

Deciding how to handle your mind during this time is part of the effort that goes into a yin session. Using this time to allow yourself to be with your thoughts and emotions. Holding a position is one of the few opportunities many of us get to simply "be"—to not be pressed to think about or do anything other than be present in the pose. If your mind starts to wander it is fine, when you realise it has, accept the thoughts and just come back to being in tune with the breath.

Should I keep my eyes closed?

If you are new to yin, closing your eyes may allow you to settle more deeply into the pose. However, if keeping your eyes open for the duration of the practice allows you to feel more mentally, emotionally, or physically comfortable, then certainly feel free to do so. Some pose will like the 'Tree' or Warrior 3, you will need to have your eyes open to be able to focus on specific spot, so that you can maintain your balance. If you suffer with dizziness or vertigo, you may need to keep your eyes open. There is no right or wrong answer here; it's all about what works for you.

Does alignment matter?

The concept of alignment in yin yoga is important to ensure that your gaining the most from the pose, it also serves to keep you from overstretching and straining the ligaments of the joints. If you feel sensation (not pain!) in the area being targeted, that's an indication that your alignment in the posture is probably correct for your body. Your teacher will ensure that your alignment is correct for each pose.

What does it mean finding your edge?

Your edge is the point in the pose where you are both mentally and physically challenged while still maintaining balance and ease. It's all about stretching as far as your body will allow in the pose. You should feel challenged in the posture, possibly shaking a little bit, but not to the point of exhaustion or injury. When you reach your first edge, you should be feeling a strong stretching sensation across the span of the area that the pose is targeting, but your breath is easy, you are probably in a place of "comfortable discomfort". You can stay there for a while and explore the sensations you're having; once you're comfortable in the pose, you might be able to increase your edge gradually.

Discomfort that presents as sharp pain in concentrated areas or causes uneven, strained breathing should alert you to ease back. A well-trained yin teacher should be able to offer an alternate posture or suggest prop placement that safely allows you to target the stretch. Props are commonly used in yin classes to ensure that everyone is able to access postures in the most beneficial way.

