

weekend 1:

yin yoga

earth element: grounding,
nourishing & transforming

what's inside?

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introduction

This weekend we will focus on grounding into our physical body in order to explore the deep layers of ourselves from the energetic, mental/emotional and spiritual aspects. Starting with some basic concepts of Daoism and TCM such as Human being, Yin & Yang, Qi & Blood and Meridian system, we will then elaborate one of the five elements: Earth, and its related organs and meridians Stomach & Spleen. Through Qi Gong exercises, asanas practice, Inner smile meditation and Six healing sounds mediation the theory will become "alive".

learning objectives

After this weekend, students should be able to:

- explain the basic concepts: Human being, Yin & Yang, Qi & Blood, Meridian system
- explain the characteristics of the Earth element
- understand the physical, energetic, mental/emotional and spiritual functions of Stomach & Spleen
- describe the location of the Stomach & Spleen meridians
- use different Yin asanas and other exercises to cultivate the element, organs and meridians

*"The Way (Dao) produces one, one produces two.
The two produce the three and the three produce all things.
All things submit to yin and embrace yang.
They soften their energy to achieve harmony."*

Dao De Jing, Lao Zi (translated by Charles Muller)

1. basic concepts of daoism and tcm

1.1 human being

Unlike in the West, Daoism and the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) hold a holistic view on Human being, health and life. Human being is a part of the universe. The Heaven exists and operates "independently"; the Earth is under influence of the Heaven. Human being, between Heaven and Earth, is being influenced by both. Just like the Chinese characters show hereunder:



human being, people, person



heaven, sky, day, weather

Human body, mind and spirit is being considered as micro cosmos, constantly reflecting and interacting with macro cosmos.

A human is a holistic organic entity that consists of

- Shen (Soul/Spirit) that leads and regulates everything
- the physical body and organs as framework
- five Zang (Yin organs) combined with six Fu (Yang organs) as core
- fundamental substances such as Qi, Blood, Jing (Essence) and Body Fluids
- meridians in which Qi and Blood are flowing and which connect Zang Fu organs with all parts of the body such as skin, muscles, bones, joints, sense organs and so on
- interaction between internal and external environment

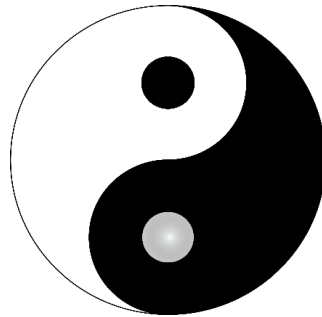
A healthy life means in harmony with oneself, environment and nature.

1.2 yin & yang

Yin and Yang is one of the most important concepts of Daoism and is being used frequently in traditional oriental medicines. It is symbolized in the images here below:

陽

Yang
sunny side of hill



陰

Yin
shady side of hill

*"The Way that can be followed is not the eternal Way.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name."*

-

Dao De Jing, Lao Zi

It is a significant philosophical model to describe all levels of phenomena: in nature, body, food, social events, emotions and so on. Similar philosophy in ancient India is Advaita (non-dualism).

Everything originates from Dao

- Dao in Chinese, Tao in the West, Do in Japanese
- way, path
- cosmic oneness
- infinite, large source
- everything as well as nothing
- Dao is the law of nature, whereby Yin and Yang are in harmony



The interaction between Yin and Yang generates Qi, and is the momentum behind all changes in our nature and life.

Five aspects of Yin Yang relationships

- contrary, opposite to each other
Yin – black, Yang – white
- interdependent upon, complimentary to each other;
Yin is the base of Yang, Yang is the manifestation of Yin; without Yin no existing of Yang and vice versa;
- continuous adjustment to keep the dynamic balance;
when there is relatively more Yin (Yang), then there is relatively less Yang (Yin); when there is relatively less Yin (Yang), then there is relatively more Yang (Yin).
- transformation into each other;
under certain circumstances, Yin can transform into Yang and visa versa.
- Infinite divisibility of Yin and Yang;
Yin is in Yang and Yang in Yin

Therefore, all is relative: nothing is absolute Yin or Yang, the context is very important.

Applications to body and yoga practice

<i>Items</i>	<i>Yin</i>	<i>Yang</i>
Body structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower part - Front - Interior - Anterior-medial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upper part - Back - Exterior - Posterior-lateral
Internal organs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zang organs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fu organs
Substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jing (Essence), Blood, Body Fluids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qi, Shen (Soul/Spirit)
Body tissues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bones, joints, ligaments, fascia network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skin, muscles, tendons
Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plastic, hidden, higher density, cooler, dryer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elastic, superficial, lower density, warmer, moister
Yoga movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slow, gentle, holding for a long period of time, muscles relaxed, to build mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active, strong, holding for a short period of time, muscles engaged, to build stability

1.3 fundamental substances

Traditional Chinese Medicine sees the working of the body and mind as a result of the interaction of five fundamental substances: Jing (Essence), Qi, Shen (Soul/Spirit), Blood and Body Fluids. At the basis of all is Qi: all other substances are manifestations of Qi in varying degrees of density, materiality and movement. Shen and Qi are more subtle, immaterial, volatile and therefore more Yang while Jing, Blood and Body Fluids are more condensed and material, slower and therefore more Yin. Jing, Qi and Shen are called as "Three Treasures" of the human body.

qi

Everything is Qi



- Qi in Chinese, Ki in Japanese, Prana in Sanskrit, Chi/vital energy/life force etc. in the West
upper part: vapor, steam, gas, breath
under part: rice

- It is the primordial substance constituting the universe and the base of all phenomena; it is a constant state of "flux" combined with aggregation (coarse material forms) and dispersion (rarefied, subtle, non-material forms); it cannot be created nor destroyed and can only be transformed.
- Universal Healing Tao (Mantak Chia)

$$E=MC^2 \text{ (Albert Einstein)}$$

M: mass, dark matter of the universe (90%), in Daoism the body

C: speed of light, cosmic violet light from suns and stars (10%), in Daoism the fire from Dan Tian/Hara, Kidneys and Heart.

Light in motion is what makes the alchemical transformation between mass and energy possible.

- In TCM:
Qi is the essential substance of human body maintaining the vital activities and functions of all organs and tissues. An energy that manifests at physical, emotional/mental and spiritual level.
- In Yoga and other traditions: link of body, mind and spirit
- In Western (Energy) Medicine: electrical, chemical, electromagnetic energies

*"The union of Qi of Heaven and Earth
is called human being."*

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Simple Questions, The Yellow Empire's Classic of Internal Medicine

Different kinds of Qi

Kinds of Qi

Source, functions and distribution

Earth and Heaven Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from Earth and Heaven - creating Human being
Yuan Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - original Qi, pre-heaven or pre-natal Qi - in and between Kidneys, spread through whole body with help of Triple Burner - regulating birth, growth, development and all body functions
Qing Qi or Kong Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear air through breathing of Lungs
Gu Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - food Qi, grain Qi - from food and liquids essence - transformed by Stomach & Spleen
Zong Qi:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gathering Qi, acquired Qi, post-heaven or post-natal Qi - combining Qing Qi and Gu Qi in Chest - supporting functions of Lungs, Heart and Kidneys
Zhen Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - true Qi, whole body Qi - Zong Qi + Yuan Qi
Ying Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nourishing Qi - in blood vessels and meridians
Wei Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - defensive Qi, protecting Qi - between skin and muscles
Organ Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in different Zang Fu organs
Meridian Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in meridians
Upright Qi versus Evil Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good body Qi versus pathogenic factors

Functions of Qi

Yang Qi

- Stimulating, activating
- Warming, drying damp
- Protecting

Yin Qi

- Calming, controlling
- Cooling, moisturizing
- Nourishing

Both Yin and Yang Qi

- Lifting and holding organs, blood, fluids, sperms etc. in place
- Transformation, intermediating and transporting

Imbalance as a result of disturbance in quantity and quality of Qi flow

- deficiency
- stagnation
- sinking
- rebellious
- losing or closing etc.

blood

Unlike in Western Medicine, Blood in TCM is more than a material substance. It is a red liquid, rich in nutrients and circulates in the vessels and meridians to nourish the entire body. It is one of the essential substances and the basis for all vital activities. The term of Blood is also a collection of various bodily functions.

Blood is a dense, material form of Qi

- the result of interaction of post-heaven Qi and pre-heaven Qi
- from Essence of food and liquids
- from Essence of Kidneys and bone marrow

Qi and Blood are inseparable

- Blood is Yin in nature and relatively "quiet"; it is the mother of Qi and nourishes Qi.
- Qi is Yang in nature and relatively "agile"; it is the commander of Blood; generates, moves, warms up and cools down blood. Qi keeps blood inside the vessels.

"When Qi moves Blood follows; When Qi stagnates, Blood congeals"

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The Foundations of Chinese Medicine, G. Maciocia

Functions of Blood

- nourishing and moisturizing
- material basis of Shen (Soul/Spirit) and Qi

Imbalance

- deficiency
- heat in blood
- stagnation

1.4 meridian system

According to TCM, the Zang Fu organs, torso and limbs are connected by meridians and their collaterals, a complex network that runs throughout the entire body.

A network like springs, streams, rivers, lakes and seas

- pathways in which Qi, Blood and Body Fluids are circulating
- linking the internal organs and the external body parts
- connecting Zang (Yin organs) and Fu (Yang organs) with each other and with all body tissues, limbs and sense organs
- responsible for transferring information, reflecting pathological signs, providing immunity against pathogens and regulating the whole body.

12 Primary (Principle) Meridians: our main focus

- all have their own acupuncture points
- Qi flows through all the meridians according to the Chinese Clock (to be explained in Weekend 4)

<i>Meridians</i>	<i>Related organs and body structure</i>	<i>Qi flow</i>
Yin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zang organs - mainly on front side of body and inside of limbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - upwards - from feet to torso - from torso to fingers
Yang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fu organs - mainly on back or lateral side of body and outside of limbs, except Stomach meridian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - downwards - from head to feet - from fingers to head

Eight Extra Ordinary (Curious) Meridians

- only two of them, Governing vessel and Conception vessel have their own acupuncture points
- the other six make use of the Primary Meridians

Other internal and external branches

Nadis in Yoga Tradition

- Nadi means “little river” or “Channel”
- pathways along which the prana travels
- three main nadis are often discussed: Sushumna nadi, Ida nadi and Pingala nadi

Modern meridian theory

- Researchers discovered Hyaluronic Acid (HA) molecules in fascia attract and bind water which can conduct energies. The pathways of these HA/water are similar to the meridians in TCM.

"Energies flow through the connective tissues through the water-hugging of the ground substance."

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The Complete Guide to Yin Yoga, Bernie Clark

2. theory: earth element

Out of the five elements (to be explained in Weekend 2) in Daoism and TCM, the Earth element is taking a central position regarding to the energetic transformation. It can be found between all seasons and is related to Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas which are also located in the middle part of our body and form the essential basis of Qi and Blood. "Yi" is the **soul/spirit** and can be trained to focus our mind.

2.1 element characteristics

Associations with the element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nutrition and fertility - stability and support - grounding, receiving, transforming and giving
Season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indian summer, long summer - last 18 days of every season
Color	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yellow
Soul/Spirit: Yi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intention, intellect, thoughts, rational thinking, focus, memories etc.
Emotion: Si	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - virtues: empathy, fairness, openness, trust - imbalance: overthinking, pensiveness, anxiety, worries, craving on sympathy
Sense organ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mouth - taste
Taste and smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sweet and aromatic
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - singing
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dampness
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7-9 `o clock (Stomach) - 9-11 `o clock (Spleen)

2.2 organs: stomach & spleen/pancreas

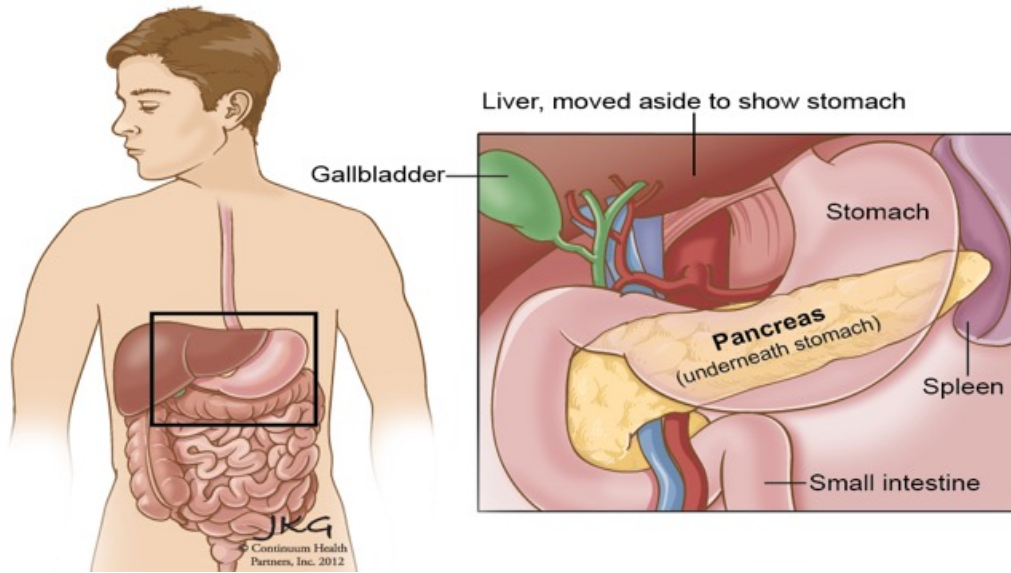


Image source: <https://www.wehealny.org/services/cancer/pancreatic.html>

<i>Anatomy & functions</i>	<i>Stomach (Yang)</i>	<i>Spleen/Pancreas (Yin)</i>
<i>Anatomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - left side under diaphragm, in abdominal area - connecting to esophagus and small intestines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spleen: left of and posterior to stomach - pancreas: between stomach and small intestines
<i>Physical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - receiving food and fluids - starting process of rotting and ripening - descending impure part down to intestines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spleen: filtering blood, immune organ, storing iron - pancreas: producing digestive enzymes; secreting hormones insulin and glucagon to regulate level of blood sugar
<i>Energetic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transporting food and fluids essence to the whole body, esp. limbs - forming the base of our vital energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extracting pure food and fluids essence from stomach and transporting to the whole body - forming Food Qi and ascending it to lungs for further transformation of Qi, Blood and Body Fluids - balancing Body Fluids metabolism - holding/lifting organs in place and keeping Blood in vessels - controlling saliva, other abdominal organs, muscles and movement of four limbs - manifesting in lips
<i>Mental, emotional & spiritual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - abilities to accept and to ground - arising and satisfying inner needs and desires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - host of Soul/Spirit "Yi" - ability to focus and to concentrate - feeling home in own body - ability to contain, digest and analyze
<i>Imbalance examples</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - indigestion, eating disorders, fatigue, menstruation problems, edema - too much "in head", "monkey" mind - feeling "empty" inside, craving, worry, anxiety 	

2.3 meridians: stomach & spleen

*Meridians
(external line)
Start*

Stomach (Yang)

-Straight under pupil, on eye socket

Spleen (Yin)

-Medial side tip of big toe

Qi Flow

- Down, front side of torso/body
and relative lateral side of leg (exception!)

- Up, relative medial side
of leg and front side of
body/torso

End

-Lateral corner of second toe

- Lateral side of chest, in
6th intercostal space

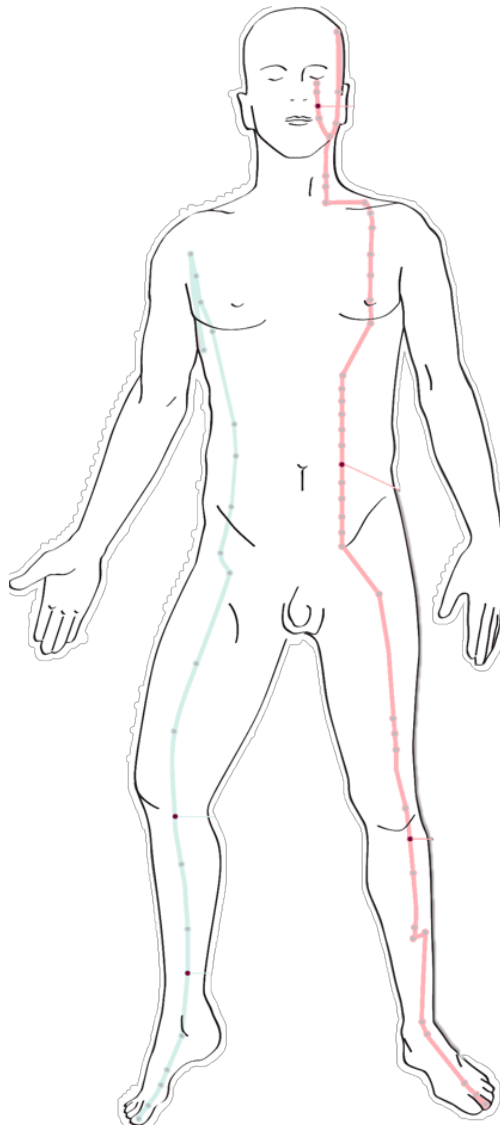


Image source: Do-In p. 34

3. practice

3.1 yin sequence

Child's Pose

(YY p. 87)

- grounding
- softening
- breathing and smiling
- focus on Dan Tian/Hara



Warming up: Lion Stretching

- gently move up to all fours (hands and knees) from hips, spine, shoulders, neck & head; free expression of body needs;
- on exhalation make sound like lion while tongue sticking out

Toe squat & Front wrist stretch

(YY p.133 & p. 147)

- from Seiza or all fours, toes tucked in, palms turning out and down on floor, fingers pointing towards knees, buttocks on heels or lifting up



Warming up: Toes Loosening

- from Seiza (Japanese sitting, Hero pose) alternate knees up gently to stretch front feet and toes, knees down, knees up with toes tucked in to stretch sole of feet and toes;
- move from Dan Tian/Hara
- hands can help on floor or in groins

Ankle stretch & Back wrist stretch

(YY p. 68 & p. 147)

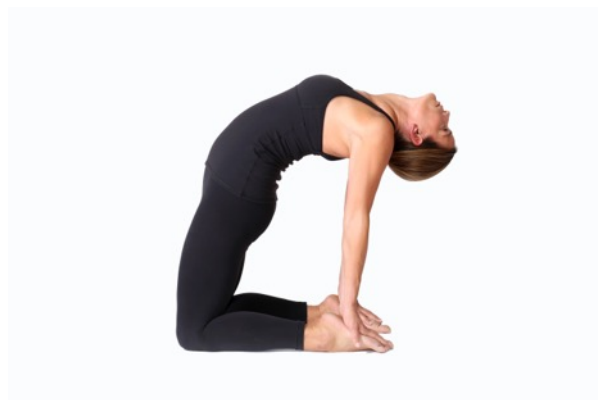
- toes slide down, put back of the hands down behind body, fingers pointing backwards, gently lift knees up, also weight on hands/wrists if possible
- release, massage, circle ankles and wrists



Camel

(YY p. 78)

- first move spine back & forth on in- and exhalation
- toes down or tucked in



Downward Facing Dog

- move hips, knees and legs



Dragon

(YY p. 95)

- one leg first (e.g. right leg)
- Baby Dragon
- Low Flying Dragon
- Twisting Dragon



Half Saddle

(YY p. 109)

- out from Dragon, sit back down on back leg (e.g. left leg), straighten front leg
- variations of Half saddle
- turn to front leg side of the body to release back leg
- turn on back hug this back/ leg/ knee



Savasana / Pentacle

(YY p. 135)



Back rolling

- knees toward chest, cross ankles, palms under knees, chin tucked in, round the back
- roll back and forth to massage the spine and back

Repeat from Downward Facing Dog on the other side, then continue with the following poses.

Full Saddle

(YY p. 108)



Last pose to choose

- gently move out of the pose and turn on back
- **Cradle:** hug both knees in
- **Lying Butterfly**
- **Happy Baby or Baby Feet**
(YY p. 102-103)
- **Snail** (YY p. 115)



Savasana / Pentacle



3.2 qi & dan tian/hara cultivation

power of “Yi” (intention)

3.3 asanas for stomach & spleen meridians

Stomach & Spleen meridians

3.3 inner smile meditation

Mantak Chia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8MmAKbek9A>

3.4 six healing sounds meditation: stomach & spleen

Mantak Chia, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yMHHxwlt4

4. going deeper

A. Review theory and practice on a daily basis

B. Personal reflection on the first weekend

- Yin & Yang, Qi & Blood, Earth element, functions of Stomach & Spleen
- Recognize own balance/imbalance in life, body/mind/emotions

C. Questions

- Who am I?
- Where is my "home"?
- Which nutrients do I need for my total development?
- How can I be rooted in my own body?

