

Rising Sun Yoga



Introduction to Yin Yoga

By Barb Pierce

It took me about 10 years to appreciate the benefits of yin yoga. I was a power and ashtanga yoga girl - I love the movement and the strength I feel after doing a powerful style of yoga; the kind of yoga that makes you sweat and makes your muscles tremble. The only problem was that I lived all of my life this way. Everything had to be a challenge.

Last year I had the opportunity to experience yin yoga while I was in India. Halfway through the first pose, I instantly understood the attraction of yin yoga. The poses, although seemingly simple, were extremely challenging to maintain after the first minute or so. After so many years of power yoga, I had forgotten how to relax my muscles and 'sink into' the poses.

I then dove into the practice of yin, learning as much as I could about this powerful practice. The results: **in my first 9 weeks of practicing yin yoga, I had more flexibility gains than I had had in my first 9 years of power style yoga.**

What is YIN yoga?

To understand yin you also need to understand yang. Yin and yang are opposing but complementary principles. Yin is generally described by words like still, calm, cold and hidden while yang is described by words like moving, excited, hot and exposed.

All things can be described in terms of yin and yang, but more specifically, yoga can be described in terms of yin and yang. A yin style of yoga is a yoga of calmness and stillness where poses are held for 2-5 minutes (or longer). A yang style of yoga is a power or ashtanga style of yoga which is characterized by a constant flow of movement 'sprinkled' with poses which are held for 30-60 seconds. In yin style yoga, poses are held with the muscles completely relaxed. In yang style yoga, poses are held with muscles engaged.



YIN Theory - why it works

Throughout our bodies, we have connective tissue - the tissue that makes up ligaments and fascia.

Meridian Theory

There are thousands or millions of meridians running through the body and it is believed that these meridians are housed within the connective tissues. Yin yoga directly stimulates these tissues, and consequently stimulates and improves the flow of chi, prana or life force energy within the body.

from YIN Yoga - Outline of a Quiet Practice by Paul Grilley

Thank you to our yin yoga models:
Allan Stanley and Eileen Hennemann

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Yin Sequence



**Vajrasan/
Seiza**

1. Vajrasana/Seiza

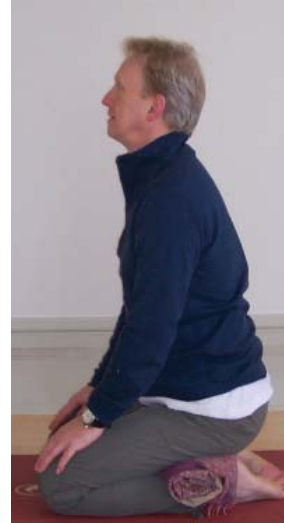
Sit in vajrasan/seiza with buttocks on heels. All muscles in legs and feet are relaxed as you sink comfortably into this position. Hands are comfortably on your quadriceps.

Focus: opens connective tissue in knees and ankles

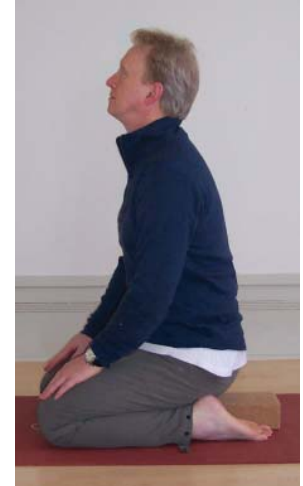
Alternatives: 1. place a rolled up blanket or pillow between buttocks and ankles or 2. sit on one or more blocks

Hold for: 5 minutes

Release by: moving to downward dog & stretching the legs in the air one by one



**Vajrasan/ Seiza
alternative 1**



**Vajrasan/ Seiza
alternative 2**



**Cobbler
(butterfly)**

2. Cobbler/Butterfly

Sit in cobbler/butterfly with sit bones on the ground, soles of feet together and allowing your torso to sink forward with gravity. All muscles are relaxed, back is allowed to fully release.

Focus: opens connective tissue in groin and hips. **bonus:** opens lower spine if you lean forward

Alternatives: 1. sit on one or more block & allow pelvis to tilt forward by sitting on the forward edge of the block or 2. if this is too difficult, lie on your back, soles of feet together, knees intending towards the ground. Use a block under hamstrings if it is too intense

Hold for: 5 minutes

Release by: moving to windshield wiper by leaning back on your hands and allowing your knees to go from side to side



**Cobbler
(Butterfly)
alternative 1**



**Cobbler
(Butterfly)
alternative 2**

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Reclined Hurdler

3. Suptvajrasana/ Reclined hurdler

Sit in reclined hurdler with right leg bent, right ankle adjacent to the buttocks.

Lean backwards to comfort

level (either with back on ground or supported by hands or elbows. head can be neutral or released backwards). Relax

quadriceps. You should not feel pain or tension in your knee.

Focus: opens psoas (groin on front side where hip bone is) **bonus:** it is a gentle backbend if you lean backwards.

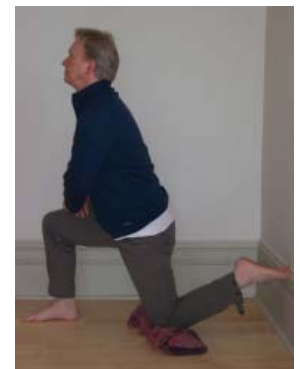
Alternatives: 1. if you feel discomfort in your knee, sit on one or more blocks. Place hands on blocks or a chair behind you, or 2. if this is too difficult, place something soft under your right knee and lift your foot so that it is supported by the wall. Lift your torso & support your weight by placing your hands or elbows on your quadriceps.

Hold for: 5 minutes then hold for 5 minutes on the left side

Release by: moving to windshiled wiper or downward dog & stretching legs out one by one.



Reclined Hurdler alternative 1



Reclined Hurdler alternative 2



Seated Forward Bend

4. Paschimottanasana/ Forward Bend

Sitting on floor, with legs extended out front, allow your upper body to fall forward so that you surrender to gravity

Focus: hamstrings **bonus:** opens spine if you lean forwards



Seated Forward Bend alternative 1



Standing Forward Bend alternative 3

Alternatives: 1. if you cannot bend from the pelvis bend your knees and/or place blocks under your knees, 2. if this is too difficult, do a standing forward bend (with knees bent if you have difficulty bending at the pelvis), releasing periodically if it is too much pressure on your head or 3. if you have high blood pressure, do a forward bend using a chair while keeping your head up

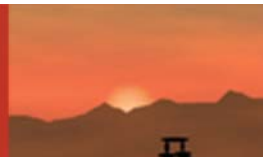
Hold for: 5 minutes

Release by: moving to cat/cow to release back



Standing Forward Bend alternative 2

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Child's Pose

5. *Ardha Yoga Mudra/* Child's Pose

Sitting on your heels, allow your body to surrender forward so that your forehead is on the mat and your hands are palm up beside your heels. Relax your neck and shoulders. Allow yourself to fully sink into this pose



**Child's Pose
alternative 1**

Focus: lower back, hips, ankles

Alternatives: 1. if you cannot easily place your head on the ground, place your forearms on the ground and relax your neck and shoulders towards the mat or 2. (not shown) - place a rolled up blanket between your buttocks and heels if this hurts your knees.

Hold for: 5 minutes

Release by: moving to downward dog



Pigeon/Swan

6. *Kapotasana/Pigeon/Swan*

From downward dog, bend your right leg, allowing the right foot to come forward in front of the body, placing foot, knee and hip on the mat. Hips are intended to be parallel to the ground. Allow yourself to sink into your hip and allow your torso to surrender forward. You should not feel pain or discomfort in your knee.

Focus: right hip, right iliotibial band and left psoas

(reverse for left leg)

Alternatives: 1. if this causes pain in your knee, try placing one or more blocks under your right hip or lean towards your right hip to reduce the pressure on your knee

Hold for: 5 minutes then hold for 5 minutes on the left



**Pigeon/Swan
alternative 1**

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**Savasana/
Corpse Pose**

Alternatives: 1. if you have a sore back, bend your knees, placing the soles of your feet on the ground

Remain for: 5 minutes

7. Savasana/Corpse Pose

Allow yourself to lie on your back, ankles relaxed, palms facing upward, eyes closed. Place a blanket or sweater over you to keep warm.

Focus: relaxation & integration of the sequence



**Savasana/
Corpse Pose**

alternative 1