

The intersection of Chakras & Meridians

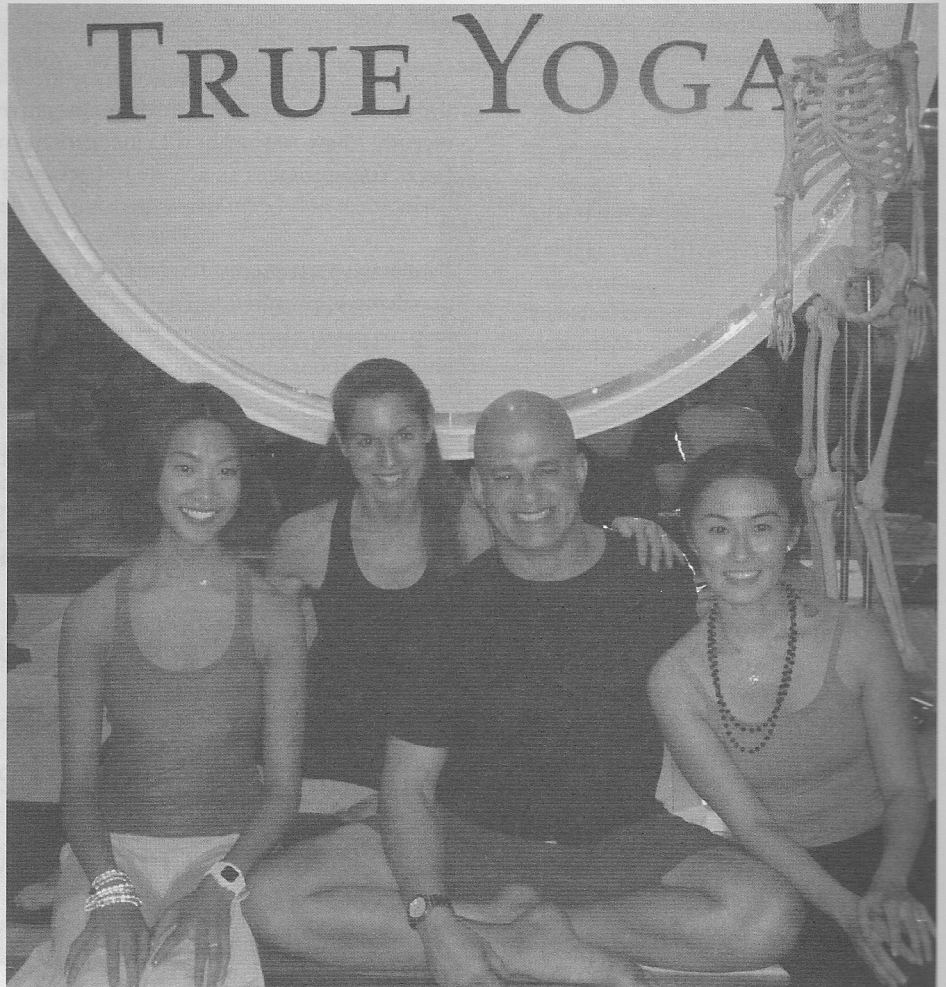
Janet Lau

PAUL AND SUZEE GRILLEY HELD THEIR CHAKRAS AND MERIDIANS YIN YOGA TEACHER TRAINING AT TRUE Yoga in Singapore earlier this year, and I attended. Their unique perspective of anatomy is gleaned from countless hours of cadaver research and finds each of us have different shape bones which determines much of our asana ability. The training also explained the relationship between the Traditional Chinese Medicine theory of meridians and chi and the yoga/Ayurvedic concept of nadis and prana. In addition, they introduced us to meridian meditation. This article, however, focuses on their teaching of chi/prana flow and Yin yoga.

I expect most readers believe our minds and bodies are inter-connected. So if the body is sick, it affects emotions and the mind becomes dull or unpleasant. Conversely if the mind has negative emotions, it stresses various organs causing heart disease, liver problem, digestive issues and so on. Eastern practices understand how wrong thinking leads to wrong emotions, which eventually leads to physical illness and a vicious cycle. To gain some control over our emotions, the Eastern way would begin by working on the physical body. By moving the life force (the Chinese system calls it Chi, Japanese calls it Qi, and the Ayurvedic system calls it prana), we deviate from an emotional vicious cycle, or *samskara* in Sanskrit. With consistent practice, we strive towards a healthy body and peaceful mind.

Only recently have Western scientists started to be more receptive towards these Eastern theories. And while they acknowledge that stimulating chi/prana seems to work, they don't know why.

And this is because, Paul says, Western scientists having been trying to see chi/prana in dead bodies. Obviously they have not been successful, as chi/prana can only be found in living tissue.



Janet, Suzee, Paul & event organiser Jo Phee at True Yoga in Singapore

chi meridians are created by hyaluronic acid

The channels for the chi/prana, are called meridians or nadis, and are actually everywhere in the living body. They are created by the presence of hyaluronic acid (HA) in our body. HA is a molecule which is extremely effective at attracting and holding water to it. It is also critical to the healing process. In fact it is now used by cosmetic companies in skin care products for its moisturising qualities.

In our bodies, HA is created by fibroblasts in our connective tissue. Fibroblasts are the most prolific cells in our connective tissues, the collective term for ligaments, tendons and fascia.

While these three structures can be seen separately, they are also one. Wrapped around every muscle, muscle bundle and muscle fiber is a tube of fascia. This fascia extends to the end of the muscle where it comes together to form the tendon. And wraps around our bones, coming together to form ligaments. In fact fascia is ubiquitous, meaning it is everywhere in our body. Fascia provides the structure for all our blood vessels, lines and wraps around our organs, holds our organs firmly in place and covers all our bones.

If you would like to see what fascia looks like, examine a piece of raw chicken. You

will see a very thin and translucent sheet of whiteish material around the muscle, which comes together at the tendon. The same exists in our body.

Understanding fascia is vital to unlocking the mystery of the meridians. In between each sheet of fascia, is a very thin layer of water. And it is the water held here which makes up most of our body. In fact of the 75-80% water content of our bodies, only 20% is in our blood. Most of the rest is in the connective tissues, the fascia.

As mentioned earlier, fascia contains cells called fibroblasts, which produce HA. This HA attracts water molecules to it, creating long pathways for chi/prana to flow, and these are our meridians or nadis.

When there is not enough water around, or when there is no chi/prana flow, the HA molecules get all coiled up on themselves. So while these little clumps of HA are visible on inspection of a cadaver, they do not exhibit any kind of meridian structure.

However in a live and well-hydrated being,

the HA forms long the meridian/nadi pathways through which chi/prana flows.

There are 14 main meridians (small intestines & heart; triple heater & pericardium; large intestines & lung; urinary bladder & kidneys; gall bladder & liver; spleen & stomach; governor vessel & conception vessel) which exist in pairs. Those at the front of our body and inside of our arms and legs are called yin pairs. Yang pairs are on the outside of our limbs and the backside of our body.

Traditional Chinese medicine theory says sickness, mental or emotional discomfort is caused by either too much chi or too little chi. Most chi stagnation takes place at the joints. And as there are more fibroblasts produced at the joint capsules, if we stimulate our joints, we stimulate the production of more HA, which in turn stimulates the flow our chi/prana.

Through practicing yoga in a Yin way, focussing on the connective tissues, we can stimulate chi/prana flow without someone else's (like an acupuncturist's) help.

SIGNS OF A GOOD YIN PRACTICE:

1. A feeling of fragility and vulnerability after releasing from the pose. This means the body feels very reluctant to quick movements during and soon after the releasing of the pose.
2. The breath starts to slow down to the very minimum. Slowly, we lose our urge to breath, a sign the para-sympathetic system is kicking in.
3. There is almost no urge to move. Again, when we are calm, we lose the habit of fidgeting and we can be happy where we are.
4. There is a sense of goodness or pleasantness. When the chi/prana flows, we feel good; when chi does not flow well, we do not feel good.

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