



# Yoga Essentials



What is Yoga?

# What is Yoga?

*yuj* "to yoke"

Commonly translated as  
"union"

So what are we uniting or  
yoking?

# Types / Styles of Yoga

Hatha Yoga	Anusara a	Kundalin i Jivamukt i Ashtang a	Sivananda Yi n Power vinyasa	Tantr a	Iyengar Bikra m Flow
Jnana Yoga	Knowledge				
Bhakti Yoga	Devotion				
Karma Yoga	Service				
Raja Yoga	Yoga Sutra of Patanjali / Classical Yoga				

# Three Rivers of Yoga

Body

Ayurveda

“Science of life”

Achieving optimal  
balance of the body

The TCM of India

Mind

Yoga Sutra of  
Patanjali

Classical Yoga

Dealt with afflictions  
of the mind

Handbook for  
meditation

Energy

Hatha Yoga

Forceful / sun and  
moon

Purify the physical  
body and the subtle  
body

Practice based

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

One of the most referred to texts in yoga dating back to 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century consisting of around 196 "threads".

Essentially a compilation of the spiritual practices up to that date and focused on renunciants and is therefore a guide to transcending the mind through meditative practices.

Patanjali focused on mastery of the mind as a path to self-realisation.

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

1.2: *yogah citta vrtti nirodhah*

“Yoga is the state in which the mental-emotional fluctuations have become still” – Christopher Wallis

1.3: Then the seer (practitioner) becomes established in their true nature (ie self realisation)

1.4: Otherwise, the seer (practitioner) identifies with the changing states of the mind.

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

1.5: There are five types of fluctuations and they can either be harmful or benign

1.6: These five are: correct knowledge, incorrect knowledge, imagination, deep sleep and memory

1.12: We still these fluctuations with practice and detachment ie not being attached to the results

1.13: Practice is the sustained effort to become stable/steady and experience unsurpassed calm

# Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

1:33 – By cultivating an attitude of friendship/loving kindness towards those who are happy, compassion toward those who are suffering, joy towards those who are virtuous and equanimity /neutrality towards those who are less virtuous; lucidity of the mind arises



# The Five Kleshas

*““The five kleshas are what cause the mind to become engrossed in the belief patterns that create mental disequilibrium and psychological distress”*

Alan Finger

# Avidya

Yoga as an opportunity to move from wrong understanding/confusion (avidya) to correct understanding/clarity (vidya).

Avidya occurs as a result of a lifetime of experiences, behaviours and conditioning that affect our perception of the world. We see ourselves based on labels, history, image rather than who and what we really are.

One prominent goal of yoga is to reduce the layers of avidya in our lives.

# Avidya

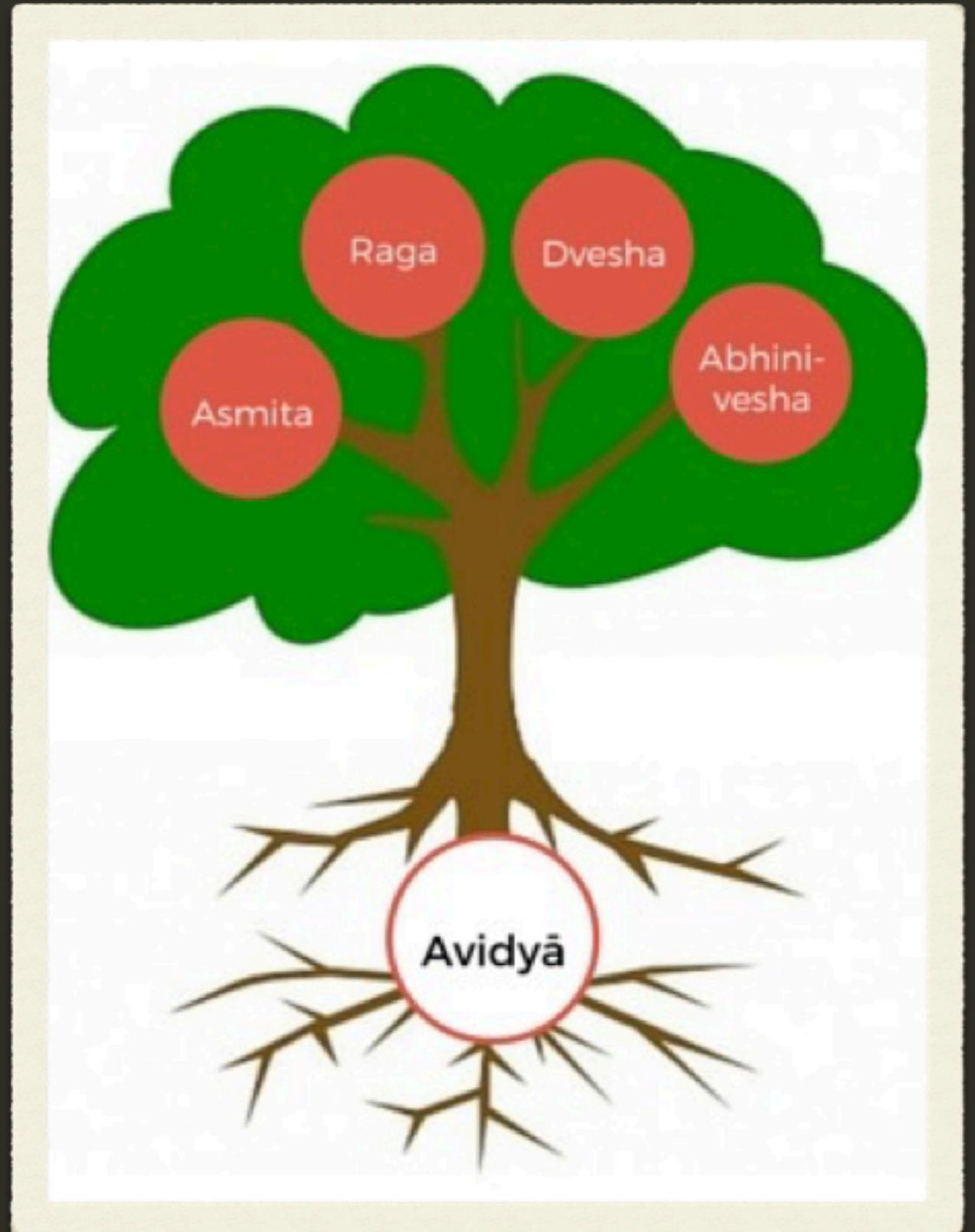
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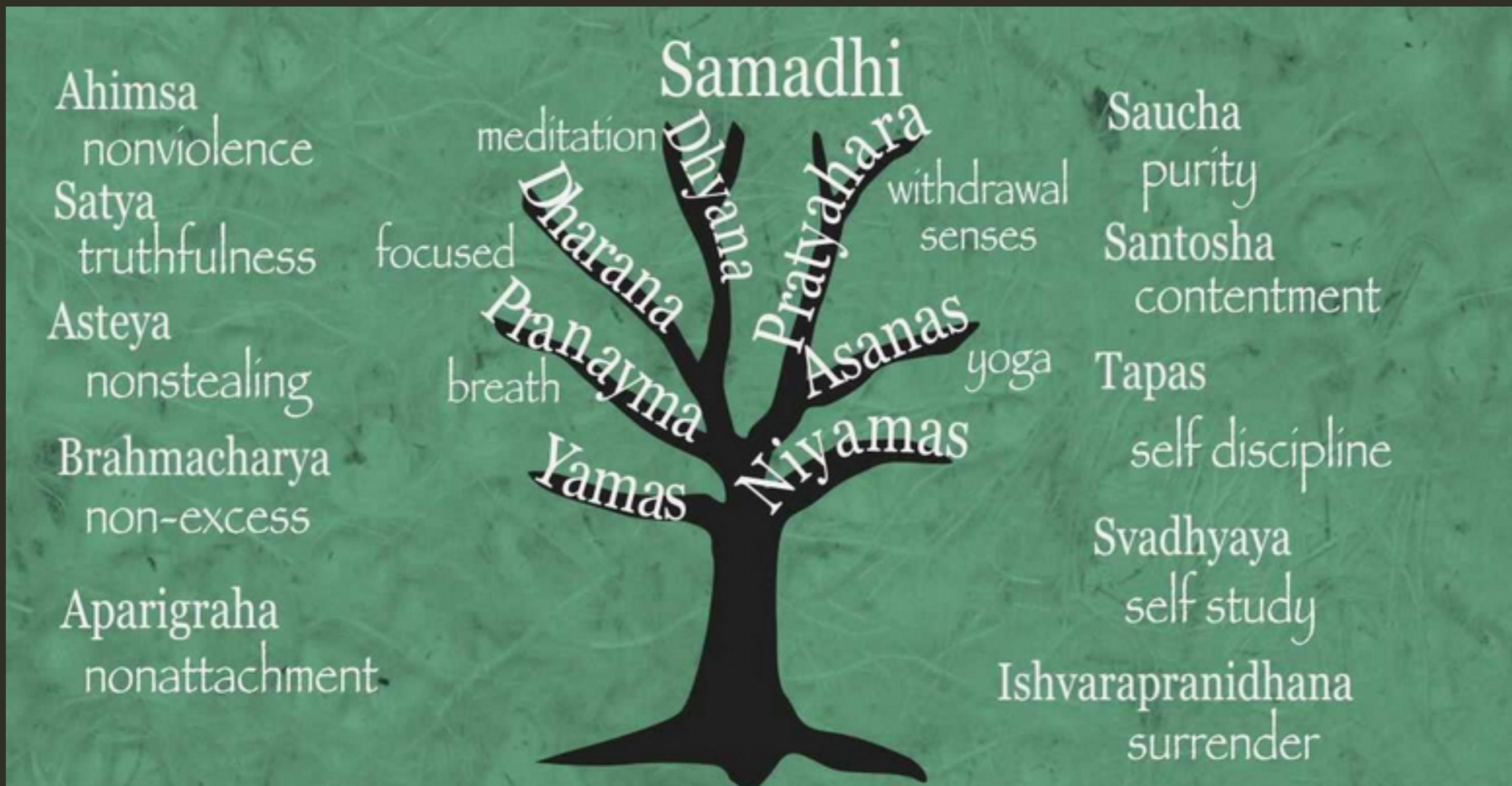
\* Asmita - ego

\* Raga - attachment

\* Dvesha - aversion

\* Abhinivesha – grasping/fear





# Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga



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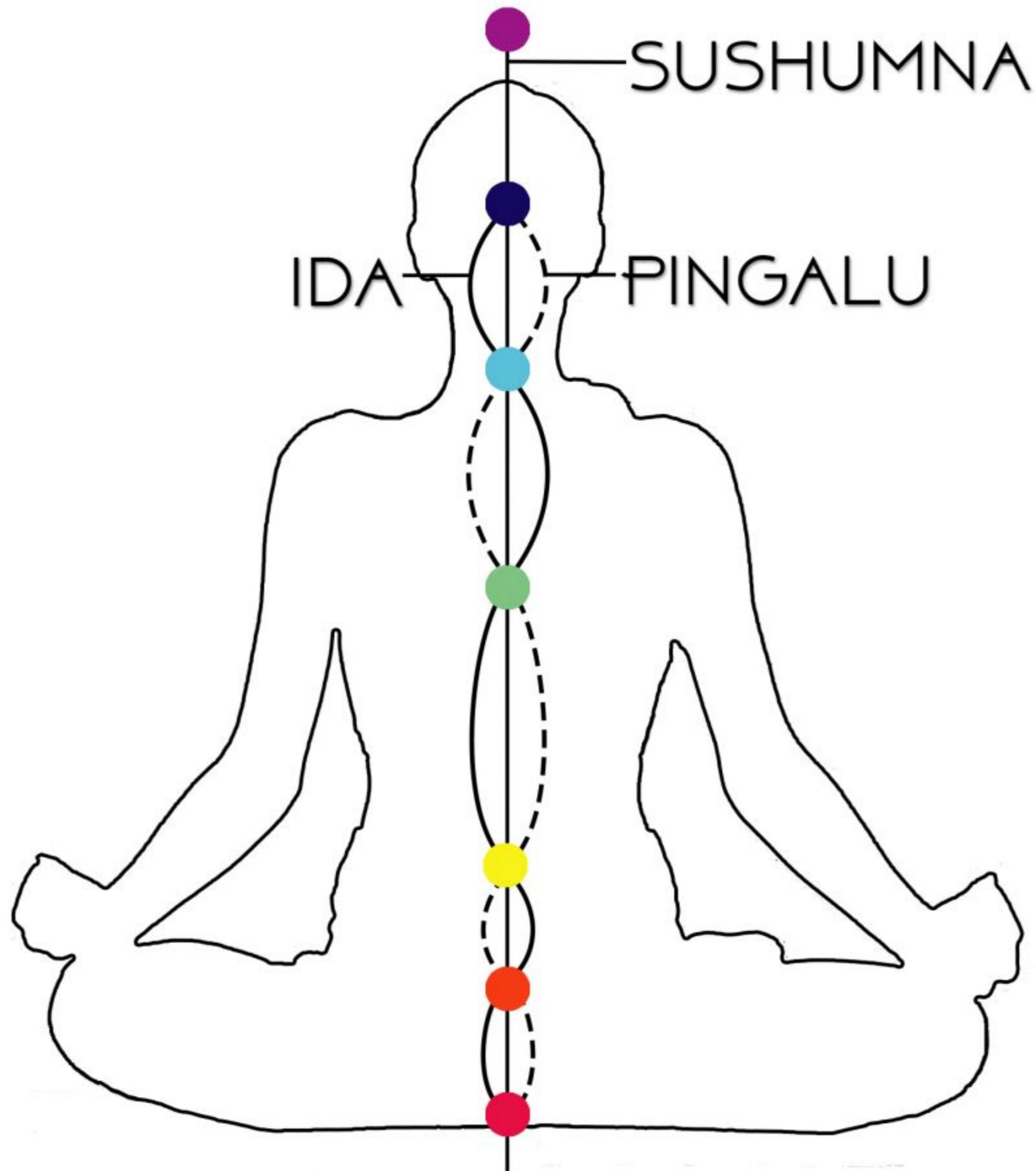
Forceful / sun and  
moon

Purify the physical  
body and the subtle  
body

Practice based

*“Yoga is the path which cultivates the body and senses, refines the mind, civilises the intelligence, and takes rest in the soul which is the core of our being”*

- BKS Iyengar



# The Gunas

All things in nature (humans included) are said to include three forces or qualities:

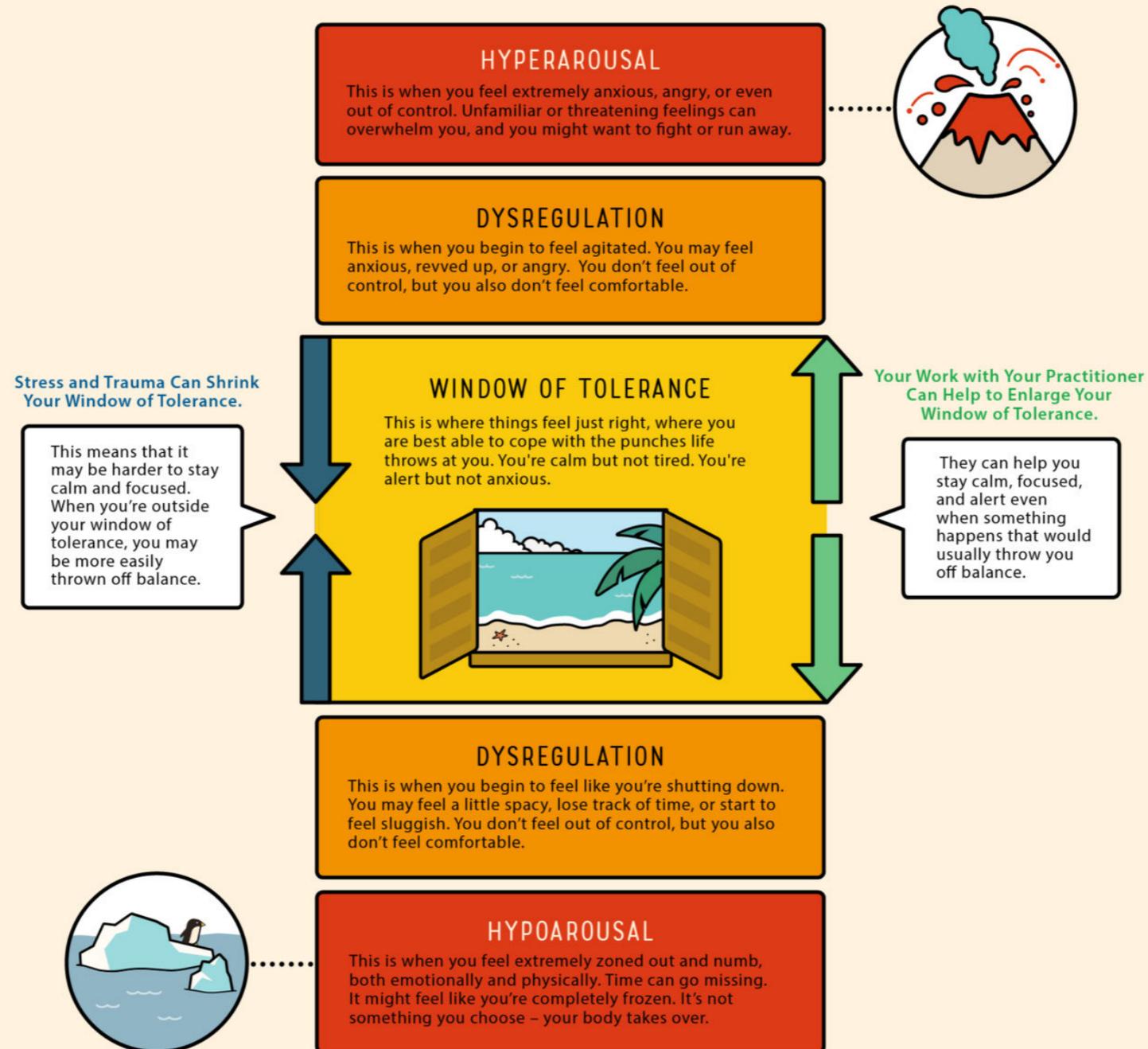
Rajas – action, movement, change. Too much = longing, attachment, agitation

Tamas – inertia, inactivity, darkness. Too much = confusion, lethargy, immobilisation

Sattva – harmony, balance, joy

# Window of Tolerance

## How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance



# Pranayama (Breath)

The forefront of our yoga practice and the primary way in which we move energy through the body.

The quality of our breath is a reflection of the quality of our mind.

“Anybody can breathe, therefore anybody can practice yoga.” TKV Desikachar

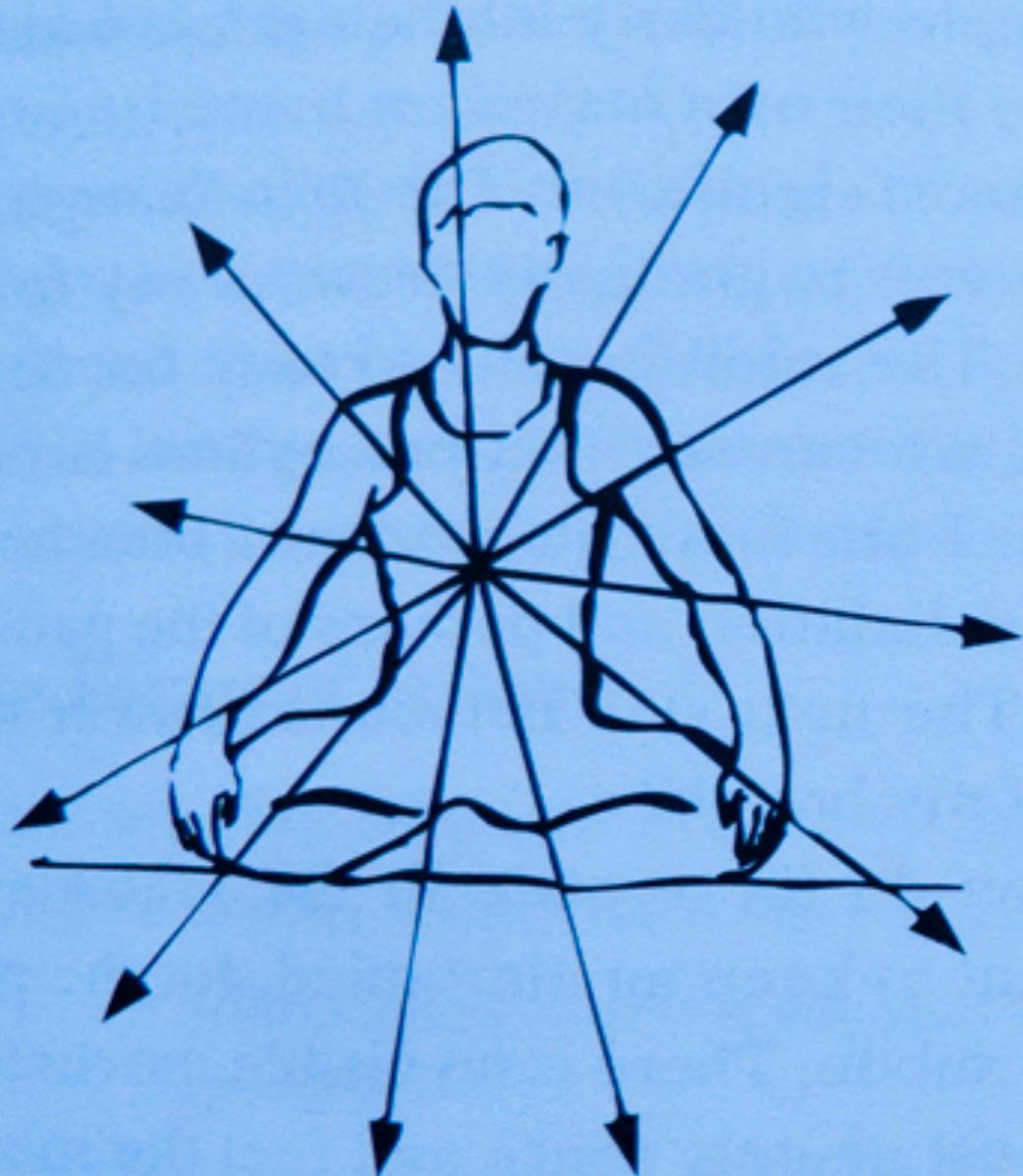
# Pranayama (Breath)

The breath affects the way that the body functions and the body affects the breath.

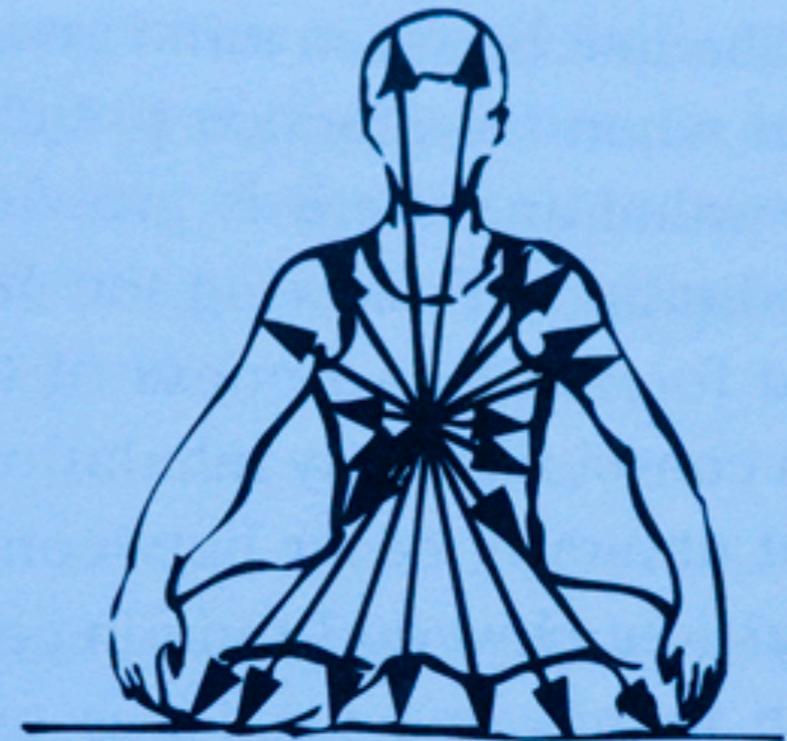
Generally, the inhale is stimulating (sympathetic nervous system) and the exhale is soothing (parasympathetic nervous system).

Different techniques are available for cooling, heating, cleansing, calming, balancing and concentration.

# Pranayama (Breath)



(1)



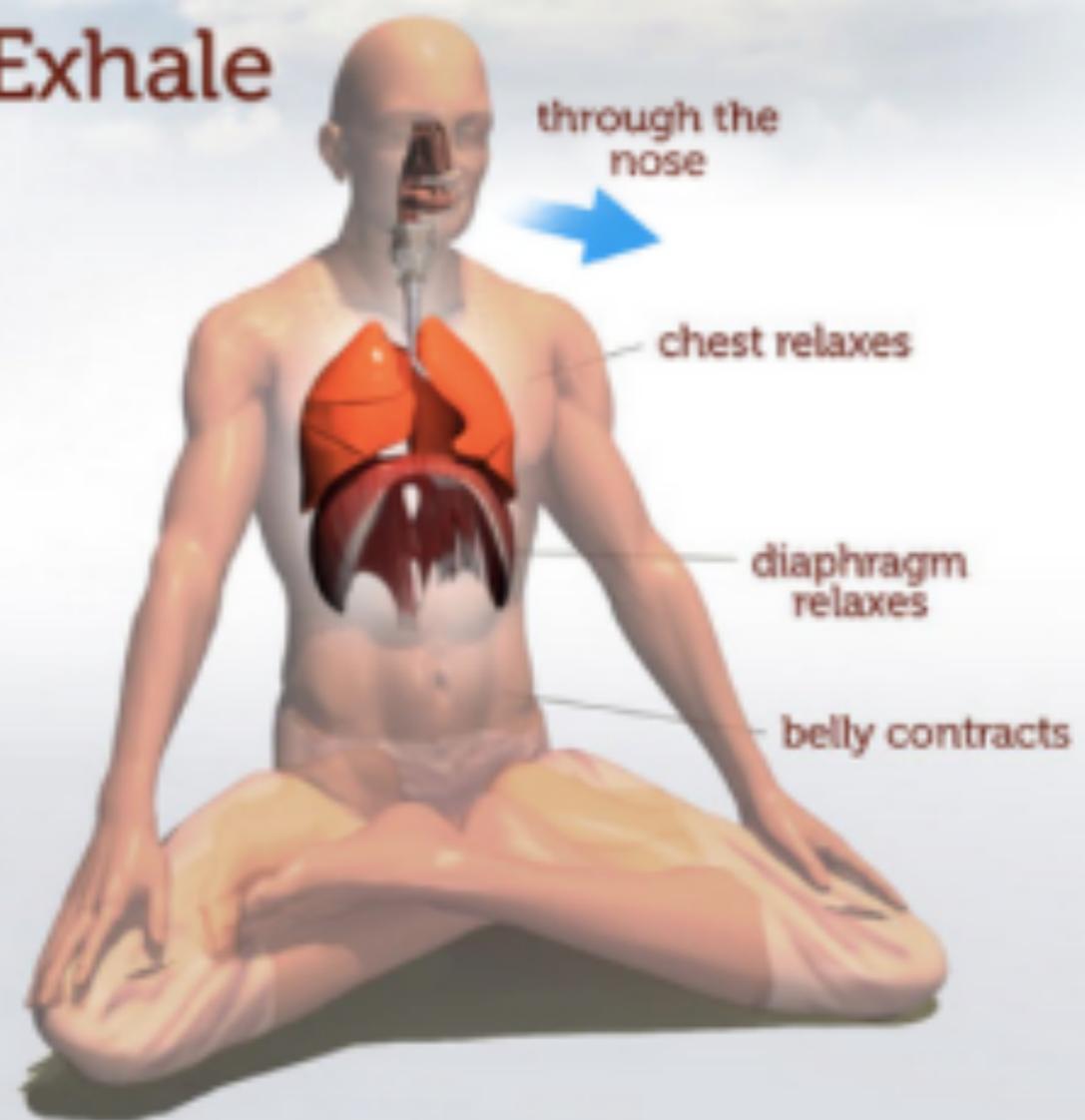
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# Pranayama (Breath)

**Inhale**



**Exhale**



*“The practice of Yoga must reduce both physical and mental impurities. It must develop our capacity for self-examination and help us to understand that, in the final analysis, we are not the masters of everything we do.”*

# Asana

The physical component of the practice. The postures that we use to move our attention into our body, heal our body and connect our body, breath and mind.

Yoga Sutra: sthira sukham asanam  
Your seat should be steady and comfortable  
(with a sense of ease).

The breath is the perfect guide as to whether we are practicing asana or just exercising.

# Meditation

Dhyana = concentration of the mind. Working towards a one pointed mind.

Dharana = sustained concentration

Developing a relationship to the thoughts, to the emotions attached to those thoughts, to our Self.

Meditation can be on: breath, mantra, object gazing, awareness, plus many more.



Asana Lab

# Why Alignment is Important

- Reduced risk of injury / protecting your joints
- Better flow of energy
- More comfort / ease
- Energy conservation / less fatigue (sthira sukham)
- Body awareness

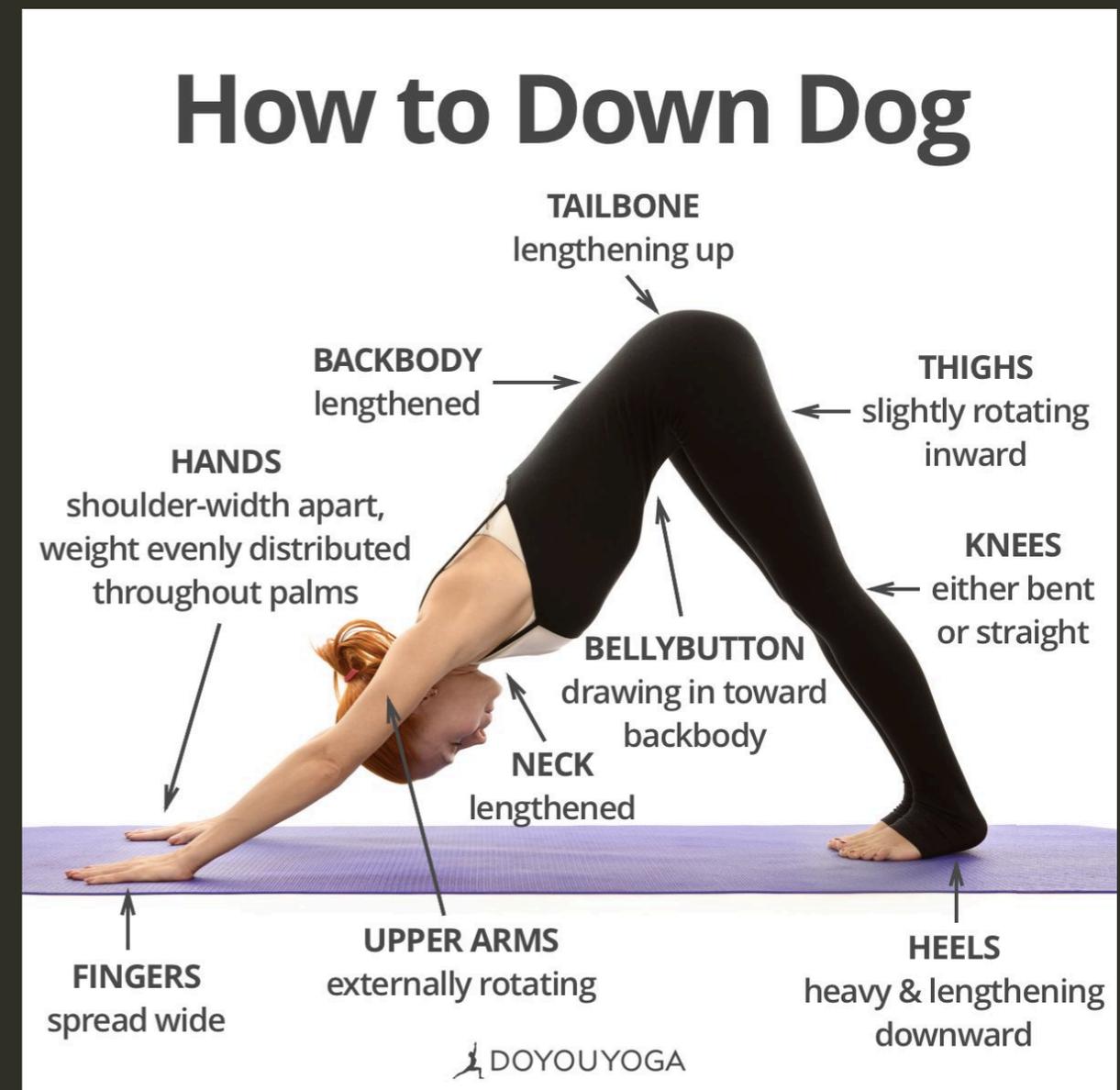
# But....

- \* Remember that yoga is not about achieving “the perfect pose” or the perfect shape.
- \* We have certain alignment priorities that are good for *some bodies* and we need to adjust as necessary, for each person.
- \* We want to be able to find a sense of stability and freedom in a posture because we want to be able to be with the breath . So trying not to become obsessed with the body shape.

# Downward Facing Dog

*adho mukha svanasana*

- \* Common mistakes:
  - Locking the knees (which will generally pull the sit bones down and round the lower back)
  - Too much bend in the legs
  - All the weight on the hands
  - No finger activation
  - Hypermobility in shoulders



The Problem

The Fix



X

✓

✓

✓





Ayurveda

# What is Ayurveda?

- Commonly translated as "the science of life"
- An ancient system (similar to TCM) focused on balancing physical, mental and emotional health
- "a program for living"
- A wholistic approach that looks at the mind, body and consciousness as one complete system
- Treats the individual rather than the condition

# The Three Doshas

- The energies that make up all things
- Each of us was born with our own constitution (prakriti) but are often in an unbalanced state (vikriti). When we are imbalanced, we experience illness.
- Correspond with the five elements
  - VATA – air and space
  - PITTA – fire and water
  - KAPHA – earth and water

# VATA

## AIR AND SPACE

### - Tendencies:

- Thin frame and small features.
- Dry skin, hair, nails.
- Talkative.
- Sensitive to the cold.
- Cold hands and feet.
- Start lots of things but don't finish
- Creative

### Imbalances:

- hyperactivity
  - anxiety
- overwhelm
- insecure
- constipation
- joint problems
- trouble sleeping
  - restlessness

# PITTA

## FIRE AND WATER

### - Tendencies:

- Medium frame and defined muscles
- Soft, warm, moist skin with a blush
- Perspires a lot
- Articulate, like to lead, confident
- Strong hunger, get "hangry"
- Strong intellect, likes to push and challenge. Analytical thinker.

### Imbalances:

- Anger
- Irritability
- Critical/judgemental
- Overachievement
- Perfectionism
- Inflammation/IBS
- Heart burn / acid reflux
- Excessive thirst/hunger

# KAPHA

## EARTH AND WATER

### - Tendencies:

- Sturdy frame, big bones. Easy to gain weight, hard to lose
- Soft, cool, oily skin
- Lush, thick hair
- Hard to elicit change, not very adaptable. Slow moving.
- Level headed. Stable mood but hard to forgive

### Imbalances:

- Low drive/energy
  - Attachment
  - Loss of appetite
  - Weight gain
- Heavy and sluggish
  - Depression
- Excess mucus and allergies
  - Oversleeping
  - Apathy

# FINDING BALANCE

## VATA:

- Heavy, oily, warm foods
- Self massage with black sesame oil
- Regularity of meals and daily routine
  - Relaxation regularly
- Avoid excess movement and exercise
  - Avoid cold and wind and caffeine
- Grounding practices with slow movements. (Move slowly and hold poses)

# FINDING BALANCE

## PITTA:

- Cooling foods
  - Avoid alcohol and spicy fried foods
  - Oil massage with coconut oil
  - Swimming / walks in the bush (shade)
- Avoid sunbathing, saunas and competitive activities
- Practicing with a cool intensity, a sense of relaxation in the pose. An inward awareness.

# FINDING BALANCE

## KAPHA:

- Heating foods
- Avoid heavy, greasy foods
- Oil massage with sesame oil
  - Deviate from routine
    - Warm baths
    - Upbeat music
- Connect with stimulating people, don't be secluded
- Practices that lift energy and warm the body (light the fire)



# Developing a Regular Practice

# Sutra 1.12

*abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah*

The fluctuations of the mind are controlled through *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (non-attachment).

Practice: cultivating the lifestyle, actions, speech and thoughts that lead us in a positive direction and letting go of the things that lead us away from where we want to go.

Non-attachment: Doing all of this without attachment to the results.

\* *The most complicated thing about a home practice is just getting on the mat. Roll out your mat and sit on it - the rest will come, you need no plan, no special outfit, no particular circumstance - you just need a mat and your butt sitting on it.*

\* Stephanie Snyder

# Six Keys to Success

\* *“Enthusiasm, perseverance, discrimination, unshakeable faith, courage, avoiding the company of common people, are the six causes (keys) which bring success in Yoga”. Hatha Yoga Pradipika*

Enthusiasm: Why do I practice?

Perseverance: What are the obstacles and how will I continue to practice anyway?

Discrimination: Understanding what is taking you closer to a deeper practice and everything that is taking you further away.

Faith: In yourself, the teacher and the teachings

Courage: What makes you feel vulnerable?

Avoiding “common” people: Do the people around you bring out the best version of you?

# Practice Toolbox

chanting

study

visualisation

mantra

pranayama (breathe)

meditation

journaling

poses

ritual

counting

gazing

intention

# Tips

- Set an alarm / put a reminder in your calendar / visual reminder
- Make a space!
- Utilise apps like Insight Timer and YogaGlo
- Begin still and end still
- Set a realistic commitment
- Consider the practice you need based on age, lifestyle and time of life

\* *“When you do yoga at home every day, it becomes no different from taking a shower. You wouldn’t dream of not taking a shower, and you don’t congratulate yourself for doing it every day. So doing a daily practice doesn’t have to be a heroic activity you impose on yourself. It’s just a simple, natural pleasure.”*

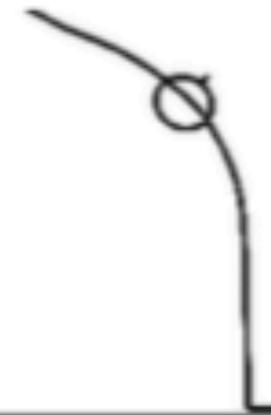
\* Mark Whitwell

# Studio Practice

- Know the difference between styles:
- Ashtanga: strong, dynamic set sequence
- Iyengar: focused on props and alignment
- Vinyasa/Hatha: extremely varied
- Yin: long passive holds
- Gentle yoga/restorative yoga/slow flow: more slow, restorative practices
- Collaborative Maroubra, Sukha Mukha Bronte, Earth and Sky Marrickville, Qi Manly and Freshwater, Dharma Shala Bondi

## Seven Minute Daily Yoga Practice " A Moving Pranayama"

*Breath leads all movements, breath through nose but feeling breath at throat*



**x4**

Inhale raise arms

Exhale lower arms

**x4**

Inhale raise arms

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

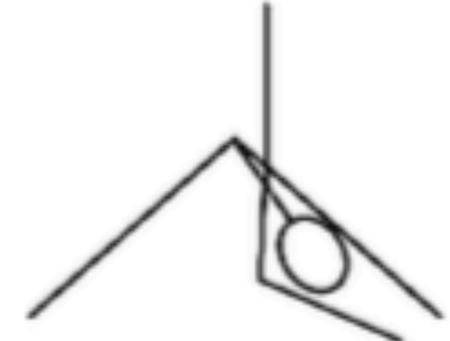
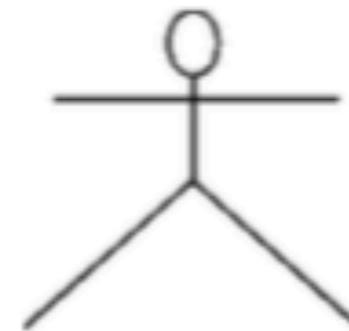
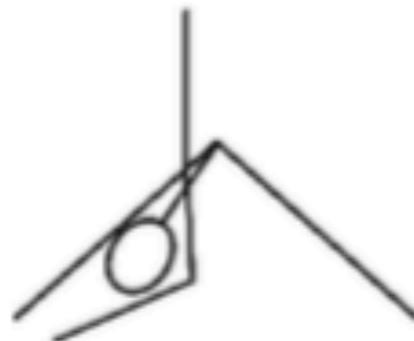
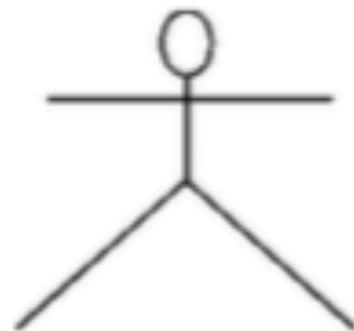
Inhale raise arms

Exhale forward

**x4**

Swap legs inhale raise

Exhale bend forward



**x4**

Arms & legs wide

Exhale twist

Inhale up

Exhale other side



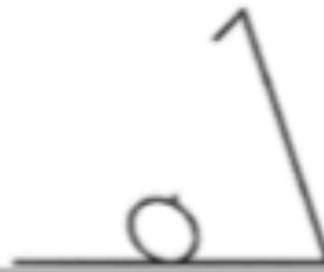
**x4**

Inhale look up in cat

Exhale child pose

Inhale cobra – use abs

Exhale down dog



**x4**

Hands knees, knees chest

Inhale legs up

Exhale hands knees  
knees chest

Inhale raise hips



**x4** rounds alternate nostril  
breathing 'Nadi Shodhana

**x4** "Sur yar.. yar namaha"  
(welcomes the sun)

Sit totally still for 3 minutes – observe, repeat mantra  
silently I on inhale, Am on exhale

# "The Mighty Oak Tree" by Johnny Ray Ryder Jnr

A mighty wind blew night and day  
It stole the oak tree's leaves away  
Then snapped its boughs and pulled its bark  
Until the oak was tired and stark

But still the oak tree held its ground  
While other trees fell all around  
The weary wind gave up and spoke.  
How can you still be standing Oak?

The oak tree said, I know that you  
Can break each branch of mine in two  
Carry every leaf away  
Shake my limbs, and make me sway

But I have roots stretched in the earth  
Growing stronger since my birth  
You'll never touch them, for you see  
They are the deepest part of me

Until today, I wasn't sure  
Of just how much I could endure  
But now I've found, with thanks to you  
I'm stronger than I ever knew

“You ruin your life by desensitizing yourself. We are all afraid to say too much, to feel too deeply, to let people know what they mean to us. Caring is not synonymous with crazy. So open yourself up, do not harden yourself to the world, and be bold in who, and how, you love. There is courage in that.” -

@rainbowsalt

“We have a choice, we can spend our whole life suffering because we can't relax with how things really are, or we can relax and embrace the open-endedness of the human situation, which is fresh, unfixated, unbiased” – Pema Chodron

“Every minute someone leaves this world behind...”  
quote can be found [here](#)

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Victor Frankl

"Always we hope someone else has the answer.

Some other place will be better, some other time, it will turn out.

This is it.

No one else has the answer, no other place will be better, and it has already turned out.

At the center of your being, you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want.

There is no need to run outside for better seeing, nor to peer from a window.

Rather abide at the center of your being; for the more you leave it, the less you learn.

Search your heart and see, the way to do is to be."

MJ Ryan

## "The Guesthouse" by Rumi

- \* This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.
- \* A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.
- \* Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.
- \* The dark thought, the shame, the malice.  
meet them at the door laughing and invite them  
in.
- \* Be grateful for whatever comes.  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

# "Today I Asked My Body..." by Hollie Holden

Today I asked my body what she needed,  
Which is a big deal  
Considering my journey of  
Not Really Asking That Much.

I thought she might need more water.  
Or protein.  
Or greens.  
Or yoga.  
Or supplements.  
Or movement.

But as I stood in the shower  
Reflecting on her stretch marks,  
Her roundness where I would like flatness,  
Her softness where I would like firmness,  
All those conditioned wishes  
That form a bundle of  
Never-Quite-Right-Ness,  
She whispered very gently:

Could you just love me like this?

# “Allow” by Danna Faulds

\* There is no controlling life.  
Try corralling a lightning bolt,  
containing a tornado. Dam a  
stream and it will create a new  
channel. Resist, and the tide  
will sweep you off your feet.

Allow, and grace will carry  
you to higher ground. The only  
safety lies in letting it all in –  
the wild and the weak; fear,  
fantasies, failures and success.  
When loss rips off the doors of  
the heart, or sadness veils your  
vision with despair, practice  
becomes simply bearing the truth.  
In the choice to let go of your  
known way of being, the whole  
world is revealed to your new eyes.

## Home by Rolf Gates

- \* We are far now from home, and weary from our travels. The sun is setting and there is no destination in sight. Yoga is a lamp lit in the window of our home, dimly glimpsed across the spiritual wilderness in which we wander. At a time when we could not feel further from our home, yoga reminds us that we are already there, that we need simply awaken from our dream of separation, our dream of imperfection. Allow this book to awaken you, to be a light that shines in the darkness, guiding you through your days, pointing you home.

# Movie and Podcast Recommendations

## MOVIES (all documentaries)

- Happy the film
- Heal (Netflix)
- The Connection
  - Embrace
  - I Am
- The Call to Courage by Brene Brown (Netflix)

## PODCASTS

- Oprah Super Soul Conversations
  - Russell Brand

# Book Recommendations

- Braving the Wilderness – Brene Brown
- Yoga and Ayurveda – David Frawley
- Meditation for the love of it – Sally Kempton
  - Loving what is – Byron Katie
  - Why We Sleep – Matthew Walker
- Women Who Run With the Wolves – Clarissa Pinkola Estes
- Breaking the habit of being yourself – Joe Dispenza
  - The Artists Way – Julia Cameron
  - The Art of Happiness – Dalai Lama
  - Any Ordinary Day – Leigh Sales
  - Lost Connections – Johann Hari

# Stay in Touch:

- \* Instagram: @kirstywrightyoga
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- \* [www.kirstywrightyoga.com](http://www.kirstywrightyoga.com)
- \* (Feel free to join the mailing list on my website for spontaneous inspiration)