

July 19
Yin & Release Practice Outline
and
Self-Myofascial Release Prop Guide

Yin & Release Practice Outline

July 19 Workshop

Focus:

Summer tends to pull our energy outward—toward activity, connection, and expression. In Chinese Medicine, this outward movement is governed by the Fire element, which reaches its peak in high summer. Fire relates to the Heart and Small Intestine energetic channels and is associated with our capacity for joy, intimacy, expression, and vitality.

But when Fire becomes excessive—especially during the long, hot days of summer—it can leave us feeling scattered, overstimulated, or burned out. This often shows up in the chest, shoulders, jaw, and forearms—places where we reach out, connect, or hold tension.

Nature is always cycling, and right now we're approaching the seasonal pivot from Fire to Earth. Late summer, governed by the Earth element, invites us to return inward—to nourish ourselves, gather what's been scattered, and come back to center. The Earth element, associated with the Spleen and Stomach meridians, governs both physical and emotional digestion: not just how we process food, but how we assimilate experience and find steadiness.

In today's practice, we support both Fire and Earth. Through heart- and chest-opening postures, we honor the radiance of Fire and soften lingering heat. Then we ground through the front body—thighs, belly, and torso fascia—to support digestion, integration, and ease. These practices are especially helpful during seasonal transition, but also supportive anytime you feel emotionally scattered or physically tight across the chest or belly.

FINDING CENTER

5 minutes – Suboccipitals Compression

Props: Two therapy balls + block (or use edge of block), and roll head slowly from ear to ear along edge)

Lie back with balls at the base of the skull, supported by a block. Nod gently or remain still. Option to soften pressure by adding a towel.

Why we do this: Calms the nervous system and relieves postural tension from tech and screen use.

Yin & Release Practice Outline

Supporting Fire and Earth through Yoga and Myofascial Release

In Yin Yoga and self-myofascial release (SMFR), we work not just with muscles and joints, but also with the energetic channels described in Chinese Medicine. These channels—understood to carry Qi (vital energy)—travel through the fascial system, a web of connective tissue that surrounds and supports all structures of the body. When fascia becomes tight or restricted, energy may stagnate. The slow, sustained stress of Yin postures and the targeted compression of SMFR help hydrate tissue, restore mobility, and support the free flow of Qi. We apply these techniques along specific myofascial pathways to support both physical and energetic balance. This class focuses on the seasonal transition from Fire to Earth, working with two complementary energetic systems:

- The Fire element, linked to summer, governs the Heart and Small Intestine channels.
 - The Heart channel runs from the chest to the pinky, influencing joy, connection, and emotional expression.
 - The Small Intestine channel travels from the pinky up the outer arm to the face and supports discernment and emotional processing.
- The Earth element, associated with late summer, corresponds to the Spleen and Stomach channels.
 - The Spleen channel ascends the inner leg and torso, supporting nourishment, stability, and integration.
 - The Stomach channel descends the front body and legs, influencing digestion and grounding.

In this practice, we emphasize the front body and arms, including the chest, belly, shoulders, and thighs. By stimulating the fascia in these regions, we help mobilize stagnant energy, regulate emotion, and ease physical tension—supporting both the expressive, outward movement of Fire and the inward, stabilizing qualities of Earth.

Together, these practices support a shift from scattered or overstimulated states into a more grounded, centered presence.

Yin & Release Practice Outline

HANDS, WRISTS & FOREARMS

4 min per side – Forearm, Wrist & Hand MFR

Props: Therapy ball + table, block, or floor

Roll from the forearm down to the palm and fingers. Pause and breathe into tender spots.

Why we do this: Releases fascial tension from overuse, typing, or emotional holding. Supports Heart/Pericardium channels.

4 min total (2 min per wrist) – Wrist & Ankle Stretch

Props: Rolled blanket or bolster under knees

Sit back on heels to stretch the tops of feet and shins. Simultaneously, extend one arm palm-up and use the other hand to gently pull fingers down.

Why we do this: Softens tension in the feet, ankles, and wrists—areas often impacted by overexertion or sympathetic arousal. Opens the lower pathway of the Stomach meridian, supporting grounding and digestive balance during the Earth season. Also, sometimes it helps to have two points of focus for poses that feel stronger.

CHEST, SHOULDERS & UPPER ARMS

2 min per side – Pectoral Compression on Block

Props: Therapy ball + block

Lie prone with ball under pec. Rest into compression or slowly move arm in an arc (ribcage to overhead).

Why we do this: Releases tension in the front of the shoulder, supports posture, deep breathing, and Heart meridian flow.

2 min per side – Biceps Release

Props: Ball + block or Pilates ball

Stay prone and place the ball under biceps. Use rocking, pin/spin, or stillness.

Why we do this: Frees the upper arm and shoulder fascia, reduces overuse tension from reaching or gripping.

Yin & Release Practice Outline

SIDE BODY, OBLIQUES & THORAX

3 min per side – Thorax / Side Body MFR

Props: Twin balls or Pilates ball

Lie on your side with knees bent. Place props between ribs and pelvis. Rock gently or remain still. Option to move balls toward lats or serratus region.

Why we do this: Supports breath, lateral fascial release, and emotional grounding through the obliques and thoracic region.

5 min total (2.5 min per side) – Melting Heart with Lateral Bias

Props: Optional blanket under knees

From hands and knees, walk arms forward into Anahatasana. Bias both arms to one side to target ribs and side body.

Why we do this: Opens heart and side ribs, clears emotional “heat,” and soothes overstimulation.

1 min – Rebound

Pause in stillness to observe any changes or sensations.

NECK, CORE, AND SPIRAL LINES

2 min – Front Neck Stretch

Props: Semi-deflated ball or block

Lie prone and place prop under the chin. Allow the throat and front neck to stretch over it.

Why we do this: Softens tension in the throat and jaw—areas that hold emotional expression and stress.

3 min per side – Shoelace with Side Bend or Twist

Props: Blanket under hips or knees if needed

Stack knees and fold into a twist or side bend. Keep both sit bones grounded.

Why we do this: Releases spiral fascia lines through the torso. Supports digestion.

Yin & Release Practice Outline

A NOTE ABOUT ASYMMETRICAL SMFR

I recommend focusing on one side at a time. This allows you to better modulate the amount of pressure using your body weight, and helps you tune in to the experience through your nervous system. Research suggests that interoceptive awareness—your ability to feel and respond to internal body sensations—is enhanced when practices are slowed down and attention is directed to a single region. Working one side at a time may also help promote greater parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) activity, which is linked to downregulation of stress and improved tissue recovery.

INTEGRATION & DIAPHRAGM

1 min – Rebound

3 min – Diaphragm Release

Props: Block + therapy ball(s), or Pilates ball

Lie face down with prop beneath solar plexus. Rock gently or rest still.

Why we do this: Frees tension at the respiratory diaphragm—supports physical and emotional digestion.

FRONT THIGHS, HIPS & BELLY

3 min per side – Front Thigh MFR

Props: Therapy ball or Pilates ball

Lie prone with prop under one thigh. Explore rolling, leg arcs (“rainbow”), or bending and straightening the knee.

Why we do this: Opens hip flexors and quads. Supports grounding through the Stomach channel.

5 min – Supported Bridge or Prone Quad Stretch

Supported Bridge: Place bolster or block under sacrum.

Optional – Upper Trap Compression

Lie in supported bridge and place therapy balls under upper traps. Explore small arm movements overhead.

Alternate pose - Prone Quad Stretch: Lie face down and bend one leg toward glute. Hold or strap foot.

Why we do this: Restores hip balance, encourages parasympathetic tone, and releases stuck tension.

Yin & Release Practice Outline

HEART OPENING & CENTERING

3 min – Sphinx or Supported Seal*

*Not taught 7/19, but offered here.

Props: Bolster or block under chest

Prop onto forearms or bolster, belly softening downward.

Why we do this: Restorative backbend to integrate front body opening and support emotional spaciousness.

3 min per side – Supported Saddle or Half Saddle

Props: Bolster behind back, blanket under hips

Sit between or on heels with one leg extended. Lean back and rest.

Why we do this: Opens thighs and hip flexors. Anchors and nourishes Earth element.

4 min – Abdominal Release with Pilates Ball

Props: Pilates ball

Lie on back with knees bent. Lift hips and place ball under lower back. Adjust after 2 min.

Why we do this: Encourages release in lower belly/psoas. Aids physical and emotional digestion.

2 min – Rebound / Pause

Let the body and breath settle.

LOWER LEGS

3 min/side – Calf Rolling

Roll the back and sides of the calves using a ball, or ball elevated by a block. Sit with leg extended for back of the calf, bend leg into half-butterfly or a 90/90 to access sides.

3 min/side – Short Log Lunge (Calf Stretch)

In a low lunge, allow the front knee to move over the toes. Let the heel rest on the floor or be slightly lifted.

1 minute – Rebound / Rest

Yin & Release Practice Outline

CLOSING & FINAL REST

5 min – Supported Fish or Heart Bed

Props: 2 blocks for Fish; Bolster (one end elevated by a block) for Heart Bed;
optional: blocks or blanket to support outspread arms

Lie back and allow the chest to open. Arms relaxed.

Why we do this: Opens Heart center (chest and inner arms), balances overstimulation, and invites emotional ease.

3 min per side – Twisted Roots

Props: Optional bolster or blanket under knees

Lie back, cross legs, and let knees fall to one side. Arms open wide.

Why we do this: Offers gentle spinal rotation and grounding. Integrates side body and emotional layers.

10 min – Savasana

Props: Support as needed

Lie down, rest fully. Optional: calves elevated on bolster supported by 2 blocks.

Why we do this: Deep integration and nervous system reset. Supports both Fire and Earth balance.

3 min – Cobra Rocks (Closing Movement)

From Child's Pose, roll up and round back through tabletop, drop waist into Cobra, opening chest and lifting chin. Exhale to round back and return to Child's Pose. Repeat fluidly.

Why we do this: Mobilizes spine, encourages breath, and gently closes the practice with intuitive movement.

Self-Myofascial Release Prop Guide

SMFR Props Guide:

What You'll Need (and What You Might Already Have)

Self-myofascial release (SMFR) doesn't require fancy equipment. You can start with what you have at home—and explore over time to find what feels best for your body. Below are some of the most useful props we work with in class, along with options for improvising and recommendations based on what I personally use in my own practice.

Yoga blocks help support the body, elevate therapy balls, and create angles that enhance release.

- **Foam Blocks:** Come in a range of densities. Some are soft and forgiving; others are firm and supportive.
- **Cork Blocks:** Denser and more grounded than foam. Offer a firmer surface, which can be helpful for certain releases.
- **Wooden Blocks:** Very firm and not usually necessary for SMFR.

What I use: I prefer denser foam or cork blocks. My current favorite brand is Manduka (for both cork and recycled foam blocks). I also like Bean Products (Chicago-based) and 42 Birds for high-quality cork props.

Therapy Balls are the main tools for targeted myofascial release. You can buy specialty therapy balls—or get creative with household items.

- **RAD Roller balls** are what I use in class:
 - **Rounds (Single Balls):** Soft medical-grade silicone, available in different sizes and densities.
 - **Everywhere Multitool (Twin Balls):** Designed to cradle either side of the spine.
- **Cork Therapy Balls:** A popular and eco-friendly option, cork balls tend to be firmer than silicone and offer a more grounded feel. They're a great choice if you prefer solid feedback with less “give.” Brands like 42 Birds offer quality cork options in various sizes.
- **DIY Alternatives:**
 - Tennis balls are a great starting point.
 - Tie two together inside a sock to create twin balls.
 - Lacrosse balls are smaller and firmer.

Self-Myofascial Release Prop Guide (continued)

Tip: Explore before you invest. Your body will tell you what it responds to best. Also, if you live with a dog, store your DIY tools accordingly!

A soft, inflatable ball / Pilates Ball is incredibly versatile—useful for the neck, front of the body, and gentle pressure points.

- Size: I currently use a 9" diameter ball for versatility. Though I also like a slightly smaller diameter for self-myofascial release.
- Material: Look for a soft-density, latex-free ball.

What I use: I use the Franklin Method® Air Ball™ because of its quality and durability. But I've also used many other brands, and the more affordable versions often work just as well for casual home use.

Remember:

There's no one perfect prop—only what works for you. The best tools are the ones that invite curiosity, comfort, and effectiveness in your own body. You can build your collection slowly, or use what you have on hand to begin exploring today.

Thank You for Practicing

Thank you for joining Yin & Release, this weekend.

We're excited to offer one last workshop classes this summer at Chi-Town Shakti. To explore more practices or stay connected, visit lakesideyin.com or feel free to reach out with any questions or reflections.

Warmly,
Kathryn