

YIN & YANG IN CHINESE MEDICINE

You've all seen it, the cool symbol for yin and yang, the dynamic curve in a circle with the contrasting dots, but many people don't realize what the symbol means. We use it to illustrate correspondences in nature and in health diagnosis. The line separating the yin and yang is curved to demonstrate the gradual transformation from one state to the other. They cannot exist in isolation. Everything contains aspects of both, and there is yin within yang as well as yang within yin. The first recorded reference to yin & yang appears in the I Ching, or Book of Changes, used by the Chinese for divination. Yin Yang theory is the Law of the unity of opposites. In nature yin/yang exist as comparisons, and therefore they are relative terms. The Chinese characters for yin & yang describe two sides of a mountain: The sunny side is the yang side and the shady side is the yin side. So the single mountain can be either yin / yang, dark/ light, hot/ cold depending on the forces that are acting upon it. Yin-yang describes a relative state of transition; there is a constant flux between the two states, and there is always a part of one in the other.

Yin signifies something completing; something responsive just as the moon reflects the shining of the sun. Yin signifies sustaining, conserving, preserving like the ocean. Yin signifies condensing or contracting. So yin conditions include darkness, coolness, stillness, rest and calmness. Nighttime is yin time when we sleep [except for you night owls]. Yin moves downward, sinking into introspection. Yin is waiting, supporting and replenishing. So when you are thirsty and parched, yin fluids moisten.

In contrast yang is brightness and sunshine, heat, warmth, movement, activity and speed. Yang is ascending movement, rising like the sun. Yang signifies something incipient- just beginning- so it implies action, dynamic motion, expanding. It is extroversion, activity, making changes and leading the action. Like the sun, it is drying and illuminating.

In Chinese Medicine we use the vision of yin/yang to guide us in diagnosis and treatment. A yang condition is acute with rapid onset. Insomnia is an example of too much activity during yin's nighttime. Constipation is heat drying up stools. Restlessness, emaciation or even dizziness can be indications of a yin deficiency that illustrate a seeming imbalance of yang excess.

By contrast Yin conditions are chronic with slow onset. A lack of vitality from insufficient nourishment will often manifest as sleepiness, wanting to be covered up and curled up, having a soft voice/ weak breathing and liking warm drinks because you feel cold and seem unable to get warm.

In Oriental Medicine we bring the body back into harmony so that yin & yang are balanced. When you are balanced, you have all of these capabilities but they do not hinder your abilities. And as performers, that is what we want, right?

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