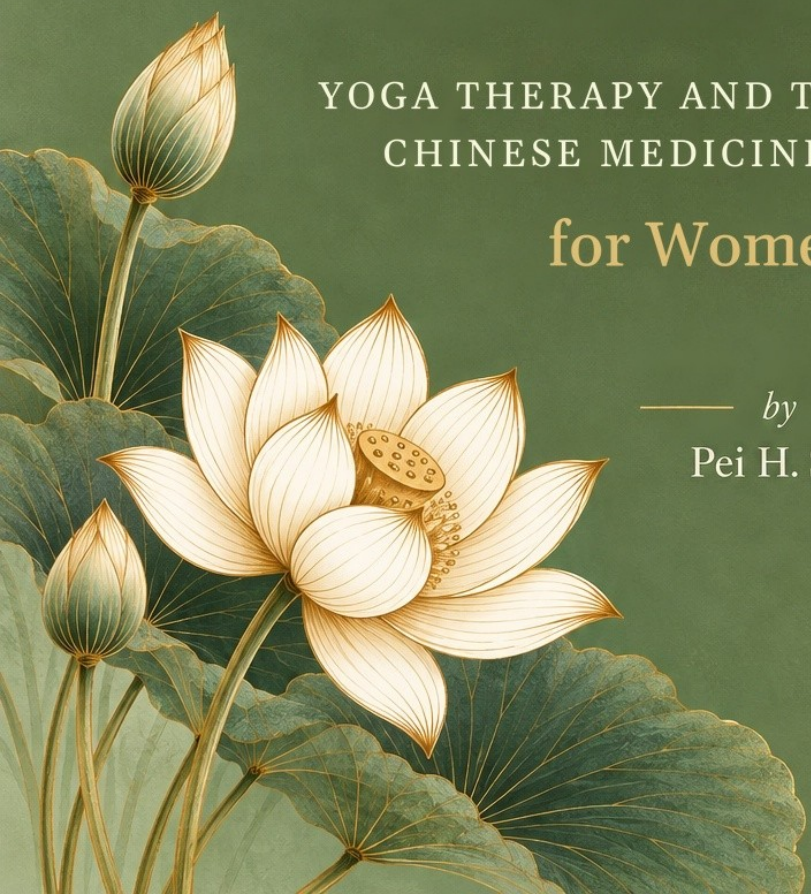
BODY STORY

YOGA THERAPY AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE WISDOM

for Women

by

Pei H. Sun



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THE BREATH PRACTICES

There are eighteen practices listed here. Each topic page has one for you. Here is where each practice is described in full, and you can come back to it for guidance whenever you need to. None of them should ever feel like effort - if a count strains, shorten it, and if you feel dizzy or breathless, return to ordinary breathing and rest.

Soft Belly Breath

TEN ROUNDS

Sit or lie down and rest one hand on your belly. Let the belly soften and swell into your hand as you breathe in, and let it fall gently back toward the spine as you breathe out. Do not push the breath — you are only removing the bracing that stops it. Most of us hold the belly slightly tight all day; this practice is mostly an act of letting go.

Physiological Sigh

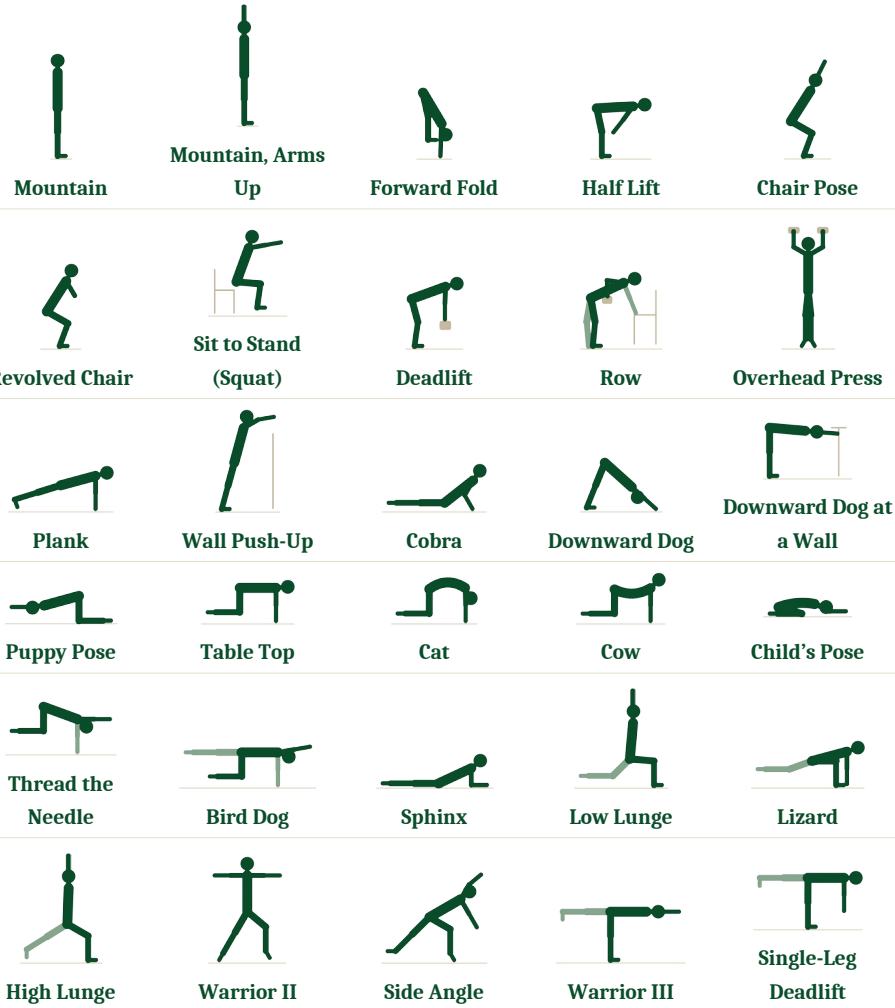
FIVE ROUNDS

Inhale through the nose until your lungs feel about 80% full, then sip in a little more air on top of that breath. Let the exhale out slowly and completely through pursed lips, as though cooling soup. The double inhale reinflates collapsed air sacs; the long exhale does the settling. It works to ease anxiety faster than almost anything else.

Also called cyclic sighing. In a randomized trial at Stanford, five minutes a day of this pattern improved mood and lowered anxiety more than an equal dose of mindfulness meditation. See "The Science Alongside the Tradition."

Pose Guide

Every pose recommended in this book, in one place. A Half Sun Salutation is Mountain with arms up, Forward Fold, Half Lift, fold, then rise.



PRACTICE SEQUENCES

Lifting Flow

Use it whenever you need a lift: low mood, low energy or a scattered mind. Warm up with 3 rounds of the Morning Energy Flow. The balancing poses help bring your focus back.



1 Chair Pose
5 breaths, 4 times.



2 Warrior II
5 breaths each side.



3 Tree
Gaze at one point. 5 breaths each side.



4 Warrior III
Hands on a chair. 3 breaths each side.



5 Goddess
5 breaths, 3 times.



6 Plank
5 breaths, 3 times.



7 Bridge
Lift and lower 8 times.



8 Rest
10 slow breaths.

EASIER

Do one round of the warm-up, hold a chair in the balancing poses and put your knees down in Plank.

ENERGY & FOCUS

Afternoon Energy Crash

TCM WISDOM

The traditional body clock gives the late morning to the Spleen and the early afternoon to sorting what you ate, so TCM treats midday as the hinge for the rest of the day. Eat standing up, distracted or braced against a deadline, and the crash arrives around three — heavy rather than sleepy. Resting for 20-30 minutes after lunch gives your afternoon more energy and efficiency.

BREATH

Physiological Sigh - Five rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

At midday. You need a quiet place and a blanket.

1. Shoulder rolls. Roll your shoulders back slowly 8 times.

2. Settle. Lie on your back with a pillow under your knees and a blanket over you.

3. Yoga Nidra. Play a Midday Yoga Nidra from the Yoga Nidra list on my YouTube (@bodystoryyoga).

4. Return. Roll to your side and sit up slowly.

Easier: listen sitting in a chair with your eyes closed.

NOURISHMENT

A warm, balanced lunch over a heavy or sugary one.

REFLECTION

What does my afternoon energy need? What gives me energy?

SLEEP & REST

Waking at 1–3 AM

TCM WISDOM

In the traditional body clock, 1–3 AM is associated with the Liver network. TCM links this network with the emotions such as anger, resentment, frustration and mood swing. If that connection resonates with you, gently notice any tension you are carrying. Extended, slow exhales may help you settle.

BREATH

Physiological Sigh - Five rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

In bed, if you wake at 1 to 3 AM.

1. Cover your eyes. Place an eye pillow over your eyes if you have one.

2. Pursed-lip exhale. Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out slowly through pursed lips, longer each time. 10 rounds.

3. Body melt. With each exhale, let one part sink into the bed: feet, legs, hips, back, arms, shoulders, face.

Easier: if you get frustrated, get up for a quiet activity in dim light and return when sleepy.

NOURISHMENT

Ease evening alcohol; keep dinner gentle.

REFLECTION

What tension am I carrying into the night?

DIGESTION

Bloating Is Information

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, digestion sits in the middle of your body. It's like a transportation hub. With that much traffic, it jams easily. Bloating is that jam. To ease the traffic, get the middle moving. Take a short walk after meals, or try a gentle backbend to open the front of your body. Bloating has many causes. If it keeps happening, see a doctor.

BREATH

Soft Belly Breath - Ten rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

Two hours after a meal. You need a mat.

1. Belly massage. Lie on your back, knees bent. Circle clockwise around your navel 10 times.

2. Wind-Relieving Pose. Hug one knee, then the other, then both. 5 breaths each.

3. Bridge Pose. Lift and lower your hips 8 times. Hold the last for 3 breaths.

4. Reclined Twist. Knees to each side for 5 breaths.

Easier: keep the bridge low. Or follow a digestion practice from Body Story Yoga on YouTube instead. Safety: skip the massage and twists in pregnancy.

NOURISHMENT

Warmer, slower, simpler meals; chew each bite. Ginger may settle the stomach. Oral aloe is a strong laxative and not for pregnancy — ask your doctor first.

REFLECTION

What is my belly telling me? When do I bloat — after meals, at ovulation, before my period?

THE TCM KITCHEN

Warming and Cooling Foods

In TCM, every food has a nature. Some foods warm the body, some cool it and some are neutral. Most meals should lean neutral, with warming or cooling foods added to match how you feel and the season.

This is a traditional way of looking at food, not a diet. Notice how your body responds and adjust from there.

WARMING	NEUTRAL	COOLING
Ginger	Rice and millet	Pear
Cinnamon	Oats	Cucumber
Scallion and garlic	Sweet potato	Watermelon
Red dates	Carrots	Mung beans
Longan	Eggs	Tofu
Walnuts	Goji berries	Celery
Chicken and lamb	Shiitake mushrooms	Tomato
Black tea	Black sesame	Chrysanthemum and mint tea

WHICH WAY TO LEAN

Lean warmer if you often feel cold, have cold hands and feet, loose stools, or cramps that ease with heat. Choose cooked meals, soups and ginger, and skip iced drinks.

Lean cooler if you often feel hot, thirsty or flushed, or have hot flashes and night sweats. Add pears, cucumber, mung bean soup and leafy greens, and go easy on spicy food and alcohol.

YOUR CYCLE

PMS and the Liver

TCM WISDOM

Liver Qi stagnation (肝氣鬱滯) is TCM's name for movement that has stopped moving: the Liver network is credited with keeping energy flowing smoothly, and when it catches, tradition expects tension, fullness and a volatile mood. Stagnation answers to motion, so today move your body.

BREATH

Whispered Ha Exhale - Five rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

You need comfortable shoes.

1. Brisk walk. Walk around the block and let your arms swing.

2. Shake out. Shake your arms and legs, 10 shakes each.

3. Warrior II to Side Angle. From Warrior II, rest your forearm on your front thigh and reach the top arm over your ear. 3 breaths each side.

4. Seated Twist. 5 breaths each side.

Easier: hold a chair in the standing poses. Safety: keep twists gentle in pregnancy.

NOURISHMENT

Rose or chrysanthemum tea; ease off salt and sugar, which can worsen the heaviness.

REFLECTION

What do I need more of before my period — movement, space, or rest? Name the emotions and write them down.

PERIMENOPAUSE & MENOPAUSE

Hot Flashes

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, Yin helps cool and nourish the body, while Yang provides warmth and energy. Hot flashes are often understood as a sign that Yin is no longer able to balance Yang, allowing heat to rise suddenly. You might feel an intense wave of warmth spreading across your chest, neck, and face, sometimes followed by sweating or chills. According to TCM, supporting Yin through rest, gentle movement, and calming daily routines may help restore a sense of balance during menopause.

BREATH

Cooling Straw Breath - Six rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

In the evening. You need a wall.

1. Seated Forward Fold. Fold over your thighs, knees bent, 10 breaths.

2. Reclined Bound Angle. Soles together, knees on pillows, 10 breaths.

3. Legs Up the Wall. A calming, Yin-nourishing pose. Stay for 15 to 20 breaths.

Easier: rest your lower legs on a chair. Safety: skip Legs Up the Wall with glaucoma.

NOURISHMENT

Cooling, Yin-nourishing foods — pear, cucumber, black sesame; ease off alcohol, coffee, and spice in the evening.

REFLECTION

What have I noticed about my hot flashes, and what seems to trigger or ease them?

EMOTIONS & CALM

Feeling Anxious

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, the Heart is believed to house the Shen (神), which refers to your mind and spirit. Heart Blood helps nourish the Shen, keeping you emotionally balanced and mentally calm. When the Shen becomes unsettled, you may experience anxiety, restlessness, a racing heart, or tightness in your chest. According to TCM, slow, gentle breathing can help calm the Shen, ease tension, and bring your mind back to a more peaceful state.

BREATH

Heart Coherence Breathing - Five minutes.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

You need a quiet place and a blanket.

1. Shake out. Shake your arms and legs, 10 shakes each.

2. Settle. Lie down with a pillow under your knees.

3. Yoga Nidra. On the Body Story Yoga YouTube channel, open the Yoga Nidra playlist and choose Yoga Nidra for Anxiety and Overthinking.

Easier: listen sitting in a chair.

NOURISHMENT

Warm, settling food; ease caffeine.

REFLECTION

What does my anxiety want me to notice?

TENSION & DAILY RESETS

Neck & Shoulder Tension

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, Qi is believed to flow through pathways called meridians, including those that run along your back, shoulders, and neck. When you're under stress, this flow becomes sluggish or blocked, contributing to tension and discomfort. You might notice your shoulders tightening after a long day, a tension developing at the base of your skull, or your breathing becoming shallow without even realizing it.

BREATH

Physiological Sigh - Five rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

1. Shoulder shrugs. Lift on the inhale, release on the exhale. 10 times.

2. Chin figure eight. 5 times each way.

3. Eagle Arms. Cross your arms or hug yourself, lift your elbows. 5 breaths each side.

4. Downward Dog at a wall. Hands on the wall at hip height, walk back, let your chest drop. 5 breaths, twice.

5. Thread the Needle. Shoulder and head down, 5 breaths each side.

Easier: do steps 1 to 3 seated.

NOURISHMENT

A warm compress on the shoulders in the evening.

REFLECTION

What am I ‘shouldering’ right now?

ACUPRESSURE

Sanyinjiao (SP6) for Your Cycle

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, Sanyinjiao (三陰交), or “Three Yin Intersection,” is an important acupressure point where the Spleen, Liver, and Kidney meridians meet. These three systems are believed to play important roles in digestion, menstrual health, and overall vitality. Because Sanyinjiao connects all three, it is traditionally used to help ease menstrual cramps, support digestion, and promote restful sleep.

BREATH

Belly-Warmth Breath - Ten rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

You need a chair.

1. Sanyinjiao. Four finger-widths above the inner anklebone, just behind the shin bone. Press firmly for 10 slow breaths on each leg.

2. Ankle circles. 5 each way.

3. Seated Forward Fold. Fold over your thighs and breathe into your belly.

Safety: avoid Sanyinjiao in pregnancy.

NOURISHMENT

Warm, Blood-nourishing food — red dates, goji, beets, leafy greens, black sesame, and warm soups.

REFLECTION

How do I feel during each phase of my cycle? Observe and record.

BEAUTY & HEALTHY AGING

Care for Your Scalp

TCM WISDOM

In TCM, the hair reflects the state of the Kidneys and of Blood. The Huangdi Neijing says the Kidneys show themselves in the hair. Thinning hair is read as a sign that these reserves are running lower, through age, overwork, poor sleep or stress. Scalp massage is a traditional way to support it. Place your fingertips on your scalp and move the skin, not the hair, in small, firm circles from the hairline to the crown and down to the base of the skull.

BREATH

Long-Exhale Breath - Ten rounds.

BODY STORY PRACTICE

You need a mat.

1. Scalp massage. Small circles with your fingertips, front to back, 3 times over your whole scalp.

2. Forward Fold. Soft knees, head and arms heavy, 5 breaths. Roll up slowly.

3. Downward Dog. Hold 5 breaths, rest in Child's Pose, repeat.

4. Child's Pose. Forehead on a block or cushion. 10 breaths.

Easier: Downward Dog with hands on a chair. Safety: skip the folds with high blood pressure or glaucoma.

NOURISHMENT

Walnuts, black sesame, black beans, eggs and dark leafy greens. In TCM, these dark foods nourish the Kidneys and are eaten for dark, shiny hair.

REFLECTION

What is one thing I'm stressed about? What can I do to ease it?

Small daily practices.
A whole-person approach to care.

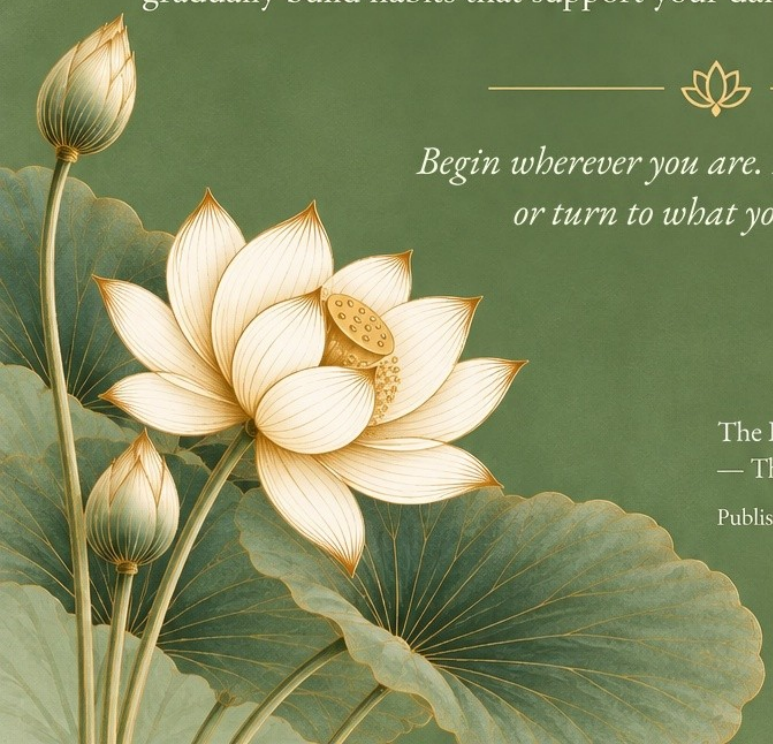
Created for women seeking a more holistic way to care for themselves, this book invites you to explore the connections between your body, emotions, and everyday habits—and make space for changes that fit your life.

Bringing together Traditional Chinese Medicine–inspired wisdom and yoga-therapy self-care, it offers practical ways to explore rest, energy, digestion, tension, and the changes of your cycle and life stages.

Through breath, gentle movement, self-massage, nourishment, and reflection, each page gives you something to try and space to notice your own experience.

This book was created to make whole-person self-care approachable: a way to listen more closely to yourself and gradually build habits that support your daily life.

Begin wherever you are. Read from the start, or turn to what you need today.



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