



Clarifying Yin Yoga by Bernie Clark

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Jason Crandell recently spoke about yin yoga on a Yogaland Podcast where he was interviewed by Andrea Ferretti [See [episode 147](#).] Several people have approached me to comment on his talk. The talk lasted about one hour, and Jason made many strong assertions, each of which I would love to take 20~30 minutes to go over in detail, but – alas, I do not have that much time. A book or two could be written (and have!) on the full breadth of this topic, but I will pick just a couple of his key points to discuss.

Early in the talk both Jason and Andrea admit that in all their podcasts, they never had a yin yoga teacher on to discuss the principles and scientific basis of the practice. This was unfortunate, because there were several mistaken characterizations of yin yoga made quite dogmatically. At the beginning they both allowed that for some people, in some cases, yin yoga could be good. Jason went on to characterize who these people might be: basically, people who are very tight because they are very strong. Everybody else, he said, should not do the practice. He admitted to not knowing anything about the energetic effects of the practices and admitted that it could be good preparation for meditation or as a meditation practice, but went on to talk about why it was not a recommended practice for the vast majority of people.

Obviously, I disagree with his assessments. While there were dozens of statements he made that I could spend time debating, I will pick out the top 5:

1. Yin yoga is extreme! It comes from a Chinese martial arts master, Paulie Zink, and is meant to develop a high degree of flexibility in order to build a performance art (Monkey Kung-fu). Good for the Cirque de Soleil, but not for normal people.

This is misleading. Paul Grilley, not Paulie Zink, developed yin yoga as a style of yoga. I can forgive Jason for this misunderstanding as many people have made the same mistake. Paulie Zink teaches a practice derived from his martial arts background. He has called this many things over the years: Taoist Yoga, Yin and Yang Yoga, and finally (years after Paul Grilley made yin yoga well known) Yin Yoga. However, what Paulie now calls Yin Yoga is not the practice developed by Paul Grilley and Sarah Powers. Paul did study with Paulie for less than one year back in the 1980's, but Paul never did Paulie's martial arts practice. Eventually, Paul developed a separate yoga class focussed entirely on long-held, passive stresses complete with opening meditation and closing shavasana, counter poses, and explanations of the postures. Paulie's offerings were never like this and still are not like this. To differentiate his