

ENERGY MEDICINE YOGA

*Amplify the Healing Power
of Your Yoga Practice*

LAUREN WALKER

CONTENTS

	Foreword by Donna Eden . . . ix
INTRODUCTION	What Is Energy Medicine Yoga? . . . xv
PART 1	Starting Your Energy Medicine Yoga Practice . . . 1
	Welcome to Energy Medicine Yoga . . . 3
WEEK 1	Waking Up the Body's Energies . . . 7
WEEK 2	Sun Salutations and Figure Eights . . . 31
WEEK 3	Working with the Bandhas . . . 55
WEEK 4	The Triple Warmer and Spleen Meridians . . . 67
WEEK 5	The Five Elements and the Power of Sound . . . 89
WEEK 6	Empowered Warrior Series and the Electrics . . . 105
WEEK 7	Chakras and Shock Points . . . 119
WEEK 8	Weaving It All Together . . . 127
PART 2	Expanding and Customizing Your Energy Medicine Yoga Practice . . . 135
	Standing Poses . . . 137
	Backbends . . . 151
	Twists and Seated Poses . . . 155
	Reclining Poses, Restorative Inversions, and Relaxation Preparation . . . 165
	Closing Your Physical Practice: Eye Yoga and Savasana . . . 171
	Meditation . . . 177

	Final Notes . . .	183
APPENDIX	Trauma and Energy Medicine Yoga . . .	187
	Resources . . .	191
	Bibliography . . .	193
	Acknowledgments . . .	197
	About the Author . . .	201

Starting Your Energy Medicine Yoga Practice

Here in part 1, you will learn everything you need to know for an effective Energy Medicine Yoga practice. The first seven weeks will introduce many new concepts and poses. If you're familiar with yoga, the poses and practices will seem like strange variations on those you already do. If you're new to yoga, these practices will be your baseline. The poses are what I call the essentials or the power poses—the ones that give you the most bang for your buck. If you have only a short time, or your body just needs maintenance, or if you're traveling or recovering from a strain, injury, or illness, these poses are your go-to poses.

Each chapter of part 1 also offers concepts to take you deeper—to add even more power to the poses, help you discover and strengthen your own energy field, and start to learn how your unique energy works. Week 8 will help you tie together all the concepts and practices from weeks 1 through 7 into an ideal, twenty- to forty-minute Energy Medicine Yoga practice. This template can be your whole practice, because it is complete and comprehensive and serves well as a daily routine. It can also serve as the basis for a longer practice, as you'll learn in part 2.

All practices in Energy Medicine Yoga work with the underlying energy systems of your body. These energy systems come from many different healing traditions. The chakras are yogic or Vedic from Indian culture; the meridians and radiant circuits go back to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Each tradition has its own way of describing similar energetic phenomena, and the two oldest medicines on the planet, Ayurveda (the yogic health system) and TCM, overlap both in the holistic way they look at the body and in the treatments they provide.

Waking Up the Body's Energies

This week you'll learn how energy works in the body and how to wake it up. I'll show you how to explore this energy using the body's own language.

Energy System of the Week: The Meridians

The meridian system is one of the most well-known and most-used energy systems in the Western world, having the advantage of acupuncture as its primary ambassador. The meridians transport energy through the body similar to the way that veins and arteries carry blood. They are specific pathways that run in the same consistent patterns in every body. These pathways run deep in the body and then come close to the skin at several points. It is these surface points that are used in acupressure and acupuncture and that we'll use in Energy Medicine Yoga.

There are eleven main meridians, each of which corresponds to a different organ and feeds energy to that respective organ: liver, lung, large intestine, stomach, spleen, heart, small intestine, bladder, kidney, circulation-sex (pericardium), and gallbladder. The twelfth meridian, the triple warmer, does not correspond to a specific organ, but relates to three areas of the body and has its hand in many of the functions of the body. Because of its enormous role and power, it is also considered its own energy system; we'll explore the triple warmer system in more detail in week 4. Two other meridians, the central and governing meridians, run vertically around the core of the body. The meridians are actually all connected and form one long, continuous path of energy through the body.

The meridians can be closely correlated to the nadis of yoga, which are also energy pathways. In Ayurveda and many traditions of yoga, there are fourteen major nadis (some traditions cite thirteen). Each of the nadis starts at the base of the spine, at the *kanda*, where the coiled potential energy (commonly

referred to as *kundalini*) is located. The nadis run in pairs parallel to the spine, connect to a chakra, and then distribute that chakra energy to the body. It's interesting that in both TCM and yoga there are fourteen major energetic paths in the body.

Each meridian is either yin or yang in nature. The concept of yin and yang is extremely important in Energy Medicine Yoga. It is the idea of opposites in a constant dance of balance. These forces, both opposing and complementary, exist in everything—night and day, light and dark, masculine and feminine. They are the dynamic interplay of the universal forces that give rise to existence. Everything contains both yin and yang. The balance comes from the continuing cycle of life. The expression “It is always darkest before the dawn” is a perfect representation of the yin-yang symbol, which has the big tadpole head turn instantly into the tiny point of the tail that then leads back to the head. The yin gets smaller and smaller and smaller until it becomes the smallest point, and at that moment, it bursts into its biggest opposite. Then it slowly diminishes again, smaller and smaller, until it is a point, and then it becomes enormous again. That's the cycle, around and around.

All the different processes of life also follow this same circular, yin-yang cycle of both balancing and transforming. Life is like a gyroscope, not a still point. All of the processes at work in our bodies spin and transform, and sometimes they have wobbles in them. They spin, and sometimes they slow, but they always continue to transform from yin to yang and back again. That spinning from yin to yang is the perpetual energy of life. When those energies get stuck or slow (the wobble), you have to help move the energy along its path. Energy Medicine Yoga—or acupuncture or another type of energy work—can be the intervention needed to help the energy move smoothly again.

Yin meridians flow upward—up the front or inside of the body and out from the chest on the soft inside of the arms to the hands. Yin energy flows up from the earth, inward, deep and inside the body. Forces of yin are feminine energies—receptive, yielding, and inward. They are associated with the moon, water, cold, dark, night, autumn, winter.

Yang meridians flow down the front, back, or outside of the body. They flow from the back of the hands toward the torso, along the outside of the arms to the face, and down the back of the body. They move outward and govern our action in the world. Yang forces come down from the heavens and are the masculine energies—active, assertive, outward directed. They are the energies of the sun, fire, heat, light, day, spring, summer.

In Energy Medicine Yoga, we work with the directions of the meridians in a more general and unifying way. If you want to know the exact path of each meridian, Donna Eden's book *Energy Medicine* offers great illustrations. There are also websites with diagrams and specific meridian-point locaters. I like Acupuncture.com and Yin Yang House (yinyanghouse.com) the best.

Other Important Concepts: Reflex Points

There are a few other key things to know as we get started with the practices for week 1.

NEUROLYMPHATIC REFLEX POINTS

These are points on the body that, when pressed and massaged deeply, trigger the lymph to dump its debris into the venous blood supply for elimination from the body. The lymph system, which is responsible for detoxing the body, does not have its own pump. It relies on ancillary movement of the body to pump it through its vessels. A practice like yoga is helpful for moving lymph, but often it isn't enough.

When a doctor taps a hammer on your knee, a reflex is triggered, and your foot kicks forward. Similarly, when you deeply massage neurolymphatic reflex points, a reflex is triggered in the corresponding organ, and that organ releases its lymph into the venous blood. It may be uncomfortable or painful to press these points deeply, but releasing the stagnant energy and toxins makes the discomfort worth it. Working these points also helps to get meridian energy moving to start the healing process.

Releasing toxins (detoxing) via the lymphatic system can make you tired or even feel ill, depending on how toxic your system is. Go slowly, working the neurolymphatic reflex points a little bit each day instead of trying to work all of them hard at once. It can be helpful to take a saltwater bath after working with these points, to help support the cleansing process.

NEUROVASCULAR REFLEX POINTS

These points connect the nervous system and circulatory system with the meridians and their elements. (For more about the five elements and their meridian correspondences, see week 5.) Holding or massaging the neurovascular reflex

points directs blood flow, hormone movement, and energetic patterns to calm and stabilize the nervous system, which helps to end the emergency-response loop. Because of these effects, massaging and holding these points helps train your brain to stay calm in the face of thoughts, feelings, circumstances, and danger, real or imagined.

These points also correspond to different organs in the body. When held, they bring increased blood flow to those organs, as well as help to disperse and release the emotional energy connected with the organ. When massaged, they wake up and start to release their excess energy, especially if they are sore and you give them extra attention.

When simply holding these points, a light touch is used, because you're stimulating the capillary beds so that blood returns to and stays in the forebrain. When the forebrain has enough blood, discernment and creative thinking are possible during a stressful situation; the physical responses of fleeing or fighting are triggered when the blood leaves the forebrain.

Working these points also helps balance the meridians, and because the meridians are associated with different emotions, these points are very powerful tools for working with the emotions.

Pranayama (Breathing Practices): Energy Medicine Yoga Breath Versus Regular Yoga Breath

In most yoga classes, the instructions are to breathe in and out through the nose. This type of breathing helps contain and build energy. It is also a form of biofeedback that shows you where you are in your yoga practice; if the physical work gets too challenging, the breath rate increases, and you may have to open your mouth to let more oxygen in. But breathing through your mouth incites a stress response, the exact opposite of what you're hoping to achieve with yoga. So instead of defaulting to a mouth breath to meet the physical demands, you regulate and slow down the physical practice. As you get stronger in your practice and build lung capacity, you are able to work harder physically while still maintaining a nose-breathing pattern.

In energy medicine, you breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. This breathing helps to facilitate and reinforce the connection between the central and governing meridians—the core energies on the trunk of the body. They connect where the hard and soft palate meet at the top and back of the mouth. If you sit still and breathe just once in through your nose and out

through your mouth, you can feel a circle with the breath. You feel the breath coming in the nose, and when you exhale through the mouth, you physically feel the breath, at the top of the mouth. The in breath *touches* the out breath here. This type of breathing is also the breathing used in the Taoist meditation known as the microcosmic orbit, which is a meditation and visualization technique for cycling energy through the body.

Another important reason to exhale through the mouth is that it releases excess energy. During an Energy Medicine Yoga practice (or any yoga practice, for that matter), as you move stuck energy, you may feel overwhelmed by emotion. A way to facilitate the release of that emotion from the body is to exhale through the mouth.

As you spend more time in your Energy Medicine Yoga practice, you'll start to build the knowledge and intelligence needed to know when a mouth exhale is necessary or when to slow down the physical work to maintain a nose breath.

For the Wake Up, the opening sequence of techniques in any Energy Medicine Yoga practice, you'll breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. As you move on, you'll adopt the yogic breath of in the nose, out the nose. As you start to tune in to your practice, watch your breath. It will become one of your greatest teachers.

Practices of the Week: The Wake Up

The first step of your Energy Medicine Yoga practice is to awaken the body and get all its energies moving in the right direction. Just as your computer has a power button and your car has an ignition switch, the body has its own set of buttons and switches for waking it up. These four techniques come directly from the Daily Energy Routine that Donna Eden teaches and that appears in her book *Energy Medicine*. Her daily routine has many more elements than just these four, but I took the four that were the most important in terms of starting your yoga practice.

The Wake Up encompasses four energy medicine techniques to be done at the beginning of any Energy Medicine Yoga practice. These simple exercises—the Four Thumps, the Cross Crawl, the Zip Up, and the Hook Up—are an easy and quick way to wake up your energy, get it moving in the right direction, and remind it to stay there. Doing all four techniques in sequence should take no more than two minutes. If you aren't going to do a physical yoga practice, but are planning to sit in meditation, you can still use them beforehand. Even if you

aren't going to do anything but hurry out the door to work, do these on your way to the shower.

THE FOUR THUMPS

Every cell in your body vibrates. There is a pulse and a rhythm to every cell and system of your body. You're already familiar with the pulse in your veins, controlled by the heart, but that is only one pulse in the body. Your breath pulses with its in-out flow. The valves in your body pulse open and closed. One simple way to communicate with your body is to talk to it with pulsation, and you do that by thumping (or tapping) on specific points on the body.

The Four Thumps practice puts this language of body to good use. Put the tips of your first two fingers and thumb together to form a three-point notch. You'll be tapping or thumping that three-point notch against several key points on your body in turn, using a strong and solid pressure, as if you were knocking on a door.

Thump one. The first thump is on a pair of meridian points known as K-27, which are the end points of the kidney meridian. They are located in the slight hollows underneath the end points of the collarbones. Find the round, bony end points of your collarbones with your fingers. Then come down off the end of the bone about an inch into the hollow right beneath. Some people will move their fingers slightly out about a half inch. If you press in and the points feel sore, you've found them! Thump or massage these points vigorously.

All the yin meridians pass through K-27 and then flip over to their corresponding yang meridians, so stimulating or awakening these points has the effect of waking up the entire meridian system and getting the energy in it moving forward. The kidney meridian is considered to carry the earth's vital life force energy (called *prana* in yoga and *chi* in TCM), so working these points also helps to increase and distribute the life chi. This action has its roots in our ancestors, the apes, when they would bang their chests. They are waking up their meridian system and preparing for the day.

For many people, these points are sore. Generally, sore points on the body indicate where energy is stuck, frozen, or compromised, and massaging or thumping these places will help break up the energy and move it. Just don't thump on a point if there is a bruise or injury at the site, or if there is some underlying issue that might be causing the discomfort.

Thump two. The second thump is in the center of the sternum, at the thymus gland. Again, thump or massage this point strongly.

The thymus gland supports your immune system and helps to generate and educate T cells, which helps your body fight disease and correctly identify invaders. The thymus also stimulates all your energies, increasing strength and vitality. This is a particularly good point to work if you feel an illness coming on.

Thump three. The third thump is the end points of the spleen meridian, located on the side seams of your body out from the crease underneath your breasts.

The spleen meridian is responsible for metabolizing food, experiences, thoughts, and energy. If you've eaten a meal that might not have been the best thing for you, thumping or massaging these spleen points will help enormously. If you've had a challenging experience with a friend or a coworker, massaging these points can help you digest that experience. The spleen meridian is also part of the immune system.

The meridian carries the spleen energy of metabolizing (the transformation and transportation of substances) to all the other organs of the body. The physical spleen is also part of the immune system and the blood production and storage systems. It is not considered a vital organ in Western medicine, but the meridian of the spleen (which still exists even if the organ does not) is one of the most important and crucial meridian lines in the body.

There is a second set of spleen points, called the spleen neurolymphatic points, that are located along the same axis as the meridian points, but closer to the center of the body; thumping or massaging these points is also quite beneficial. I tell my students to massage or thump the whole triangular-shaped rib-cage area below the breasts; you're sure to hit the spleen points. And when you find a sore spot, work it!

Thump four. The fourth thump is on the beginning points of the stomach meridian. They are located on the bone directly under the eye, in line with the iris when the eye is looking forward. This delicate bone requires a lighter tap. Use the first three fingers of each hand sequentially to lightly drum on the bone, as if you're drumming your fingers on a table.

Governed by the earth element, the stomach meridian helps to ground your energy. After waking up and activating the meridian energies with the other three thumps, grounding and stabilizing them with the stomach thump is helpful. Tapping these points also helps us to separate ourselves from a problem by

enabling us see the difference between the issue and our reaction to it. (You'll begin to see how the meridians have a physical component as well as an emotional component in week 5, when you work with the five elements.)

You can also lightly drum the entire orbital bone that circles the eye. The beginning or end points for three other meridians (gallbladder, triple warmer, and bladder) lie around the eyes, and tapping on the entire orbital bone helps to wake up and energize those meridians as well.

See figure 1 for a complete map of the points to tap for the Four Thumps.

THE CROSS CRAWL

The second portion of the Wake Up will get your energies crossing over throughout your body. Every part of your body contains crossover patterns, from the

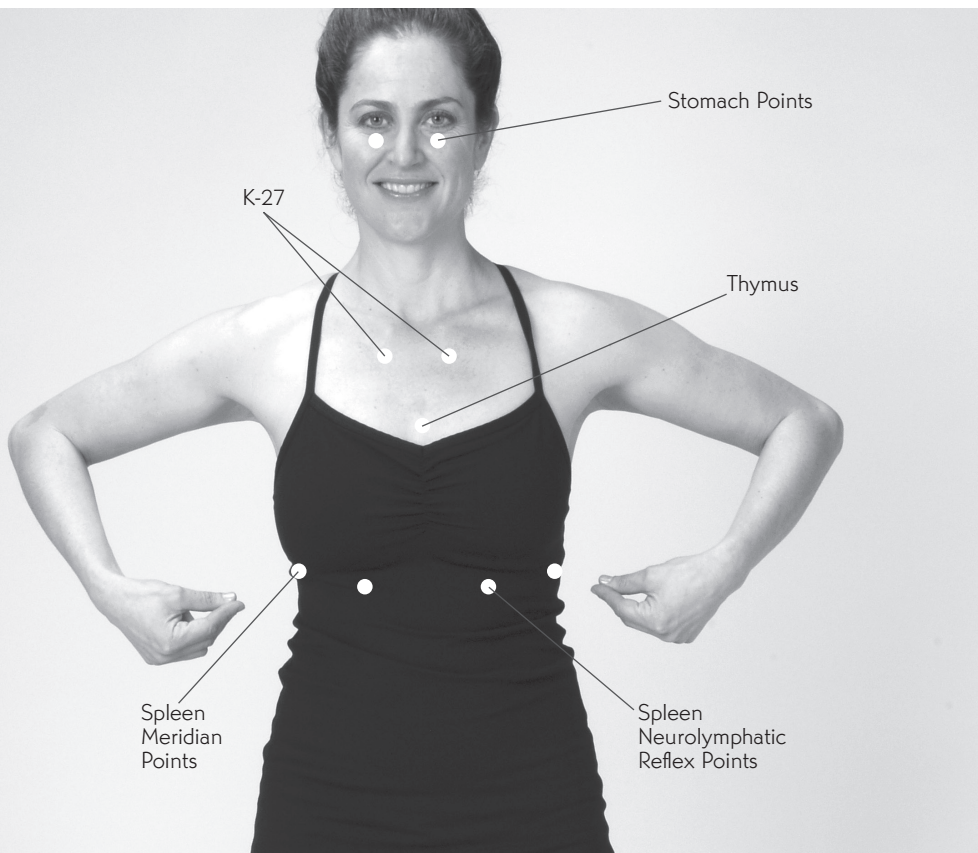


FIGURE 1 In the Four Thumps, we tap on four key sets of meridian points.

twisting ladders of DNA embedded in each cell to the two hemispheres of the brain controlling the opposite sides of the body. Through these patterns, your body communicates and carries out its most integrated functions. These crossover patterns help the body to coordinate its many disparate activities and keep all the energy systems working well together. If the energies of the body are not crossing over, your body is at a deficit and has to work harder to execute its actions.

When the body is tired, run down, depressed, or ill, it will start to conserve energy by shifting its natural crossover patterns into homolateral patterns, in which the energies run parallel to each other instead of crossing over. This switch tells the body to slow down and rest. But sometimes our bodies get locked into this pattern of tiredness. If you have trouble getting well from an illness, are always tired, are more tired than energized after you exercise, are chronically depressed, or simply feel off, it is likely that your energies are running homolaterally. One excellent way to correct this homolateral pattern is to do the Cross Crawl.

Start by marching in place, lifting the same arm to the same leg ten to twelve times. The right hand strikes the right knee as the knee rises; the left hand strikes the left knee.

After a total of ten to twelve of these, brush your hands together as if dusting them off. This momentary break in momentum tricks the energies into taking a pause. Then, when you change your movement to a crossover march, the energies will follow you.

Now do twelve crossover marches in place, with each hand slapping the opposite knee (figure 2). The right hand slaps the left knee; the left hand slaps the right knee. If you find the crossover march challenging, it is quite likely that you need to do it more.

You can do this whole routine three times at a go. Eventually your body will begin to respond to the crossover pattern, but depending on your level of energy, it may take a while. If you are physically unable to do the crossover march standing, you can do the whole routine sitting in a chair, moving just your arms and not lifting the legs and knees at all.

Tip: When I'm hiking in the woods, I often find myself dragging along behind my dog. I'll thump K-27 and then do a Cross Crawl, and instantly I've got the pep to keep up with him. The more you experiment with these Wake Up techniques and use them throughout your day, the more you'll find yourself beginning to understand how your body's unique energies work and how to feed and care for them so they work better.



FIGURE 2 The Cross Crawl brings energies from one side across to the other, for optimal integration.