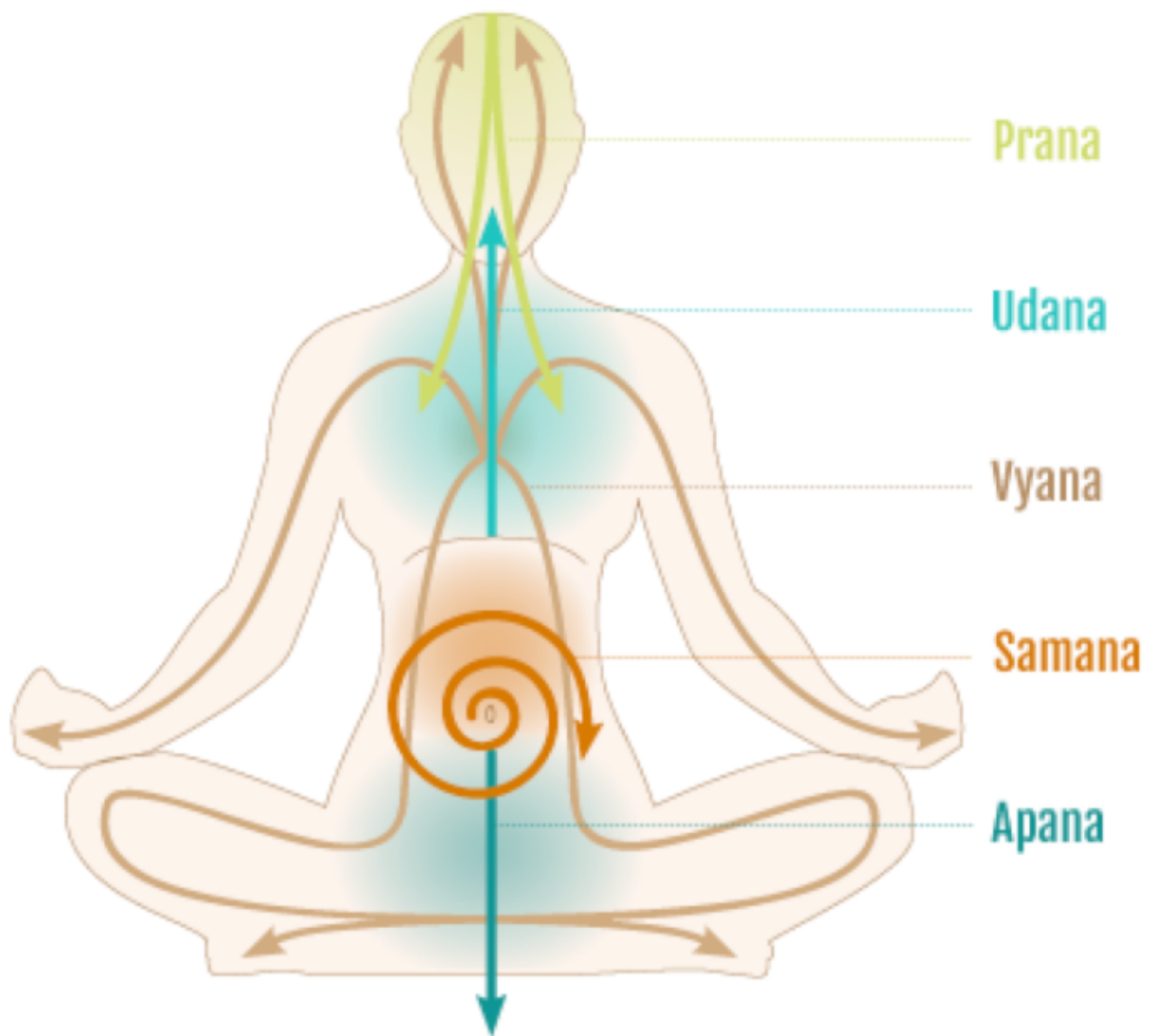


Energetics of Life - 5 Vital Winds (*Prana Vayus*) In human body:

The Five *Prana Vayus* are the energies (*pranas*) of the body that regulate and control all bodily functions. The word *vayu* means "wind", so the *prana vayus* can be thought of as the "energy winds" or "currents" of the body. When these energies are balanced, the body is healthy and all of its functions are optimized. Through understanding our own imbalances of these *pranas*, we are able to restore the balance of these energies and the health of the body.



1. *Prana Vayu* is an inward moving energy in the region of the heart and lungs. It energizes our respiration and circulation of the heart region, as well as our sensory perception (along with *Udana*). When this energy is blocked or deficient, it may lead to heart and lung conditions and lethargy.
2. *Apana Vayu* is the downward flowing, grounding energy in the lower half of the body. It is responsible for elimination, reproduction, and childbirth. Imbalance can lead to constipation, hemorrhoids, sexual dysfunction, and menstrual problems.
3. *Samana Vayu* is a centering, stabilizing energy in the abdomen, and it is associated with our digestive fire or *agni*. It energizes our digestion and metabolism, and regulates our internal environment. Imbalance of this energy leads to digestive problems.
4. *Vyana Vayu* is the movement of energy from the core of the body out to the extremities. It is associated with circulation and the peripheral nervous system. When it is deficient, it can lead to poor peripheral circulation and numbness.
5. *Udana Vayu* is the ascending movement of energy in the region of the head and neck. It energizes our thought, growth, communication, and sensory perception. When it is blocked, there may be problems around communication and mental clarity.

All these prana vayus are subsets of the one indivisible field of Prana that permeates and animates all of Creation - they just split into 5 major functional currents in the human body - all with their specific locations and points of access. If we know what they are, we can regulate our functioning the way it needs to be for balance of health. We can access these *prana vayus* through:

1. Asana
2. Pranayama
3. Meditation
4. Mudra (gesture)

At its heart, Hatha Yoga is much more than just flexibility or strength in postures; it is the management of prana, the vital life force that animates all levels of being. Prana enables the body to move and the mind to think. It is the intelligence that coordinates our senses and bodily functions. By becoming more attentive to prana—and enhancing and directing its flow through the practices of hatha yoga—we can invigorate the body and mind, develop an expanded inner awareness, and open the door to higher states of consciousness.

When the 5 Prana vayus are functioning harmoniously, they assure the health and vitality of the body and mind, allowing us to enjoy our unique talents and live life with meaning and purpose. Following is a chart of 5 vayus and their locations and functions in our system:



VAYU	Area of Body	Function	Direction
apana	pelvis	elimination	DOWN and OUT
samana	navel	assimilation, digestion	SPIRAL
prana	head, chest	INtake, inhalation, inspiration	DOWN and IN
vyana	whole body	circulation	EVERYWHERE
udana	throat	growth, speech	UP

*** Practice tip: Keep in mind these vayus when doing asanas: location of which vayu is being affected? After the pose: can you feel the subtle energetic presence: inward, downward, spiraling, upward, everywhere?

An ancient definition of *YOGI* is *PRANI* = one whose spine is full of energy. Spine is the main energy pathway (because it houses central nervous system - which IS conduit for energy). As *PRANIs*, we use asanas as containers of energy - each pose shaped to affect the Vayu we need to increase or balance. There are 6 general categories of asana in that regard. All of them are centered around **movement of the spine.**

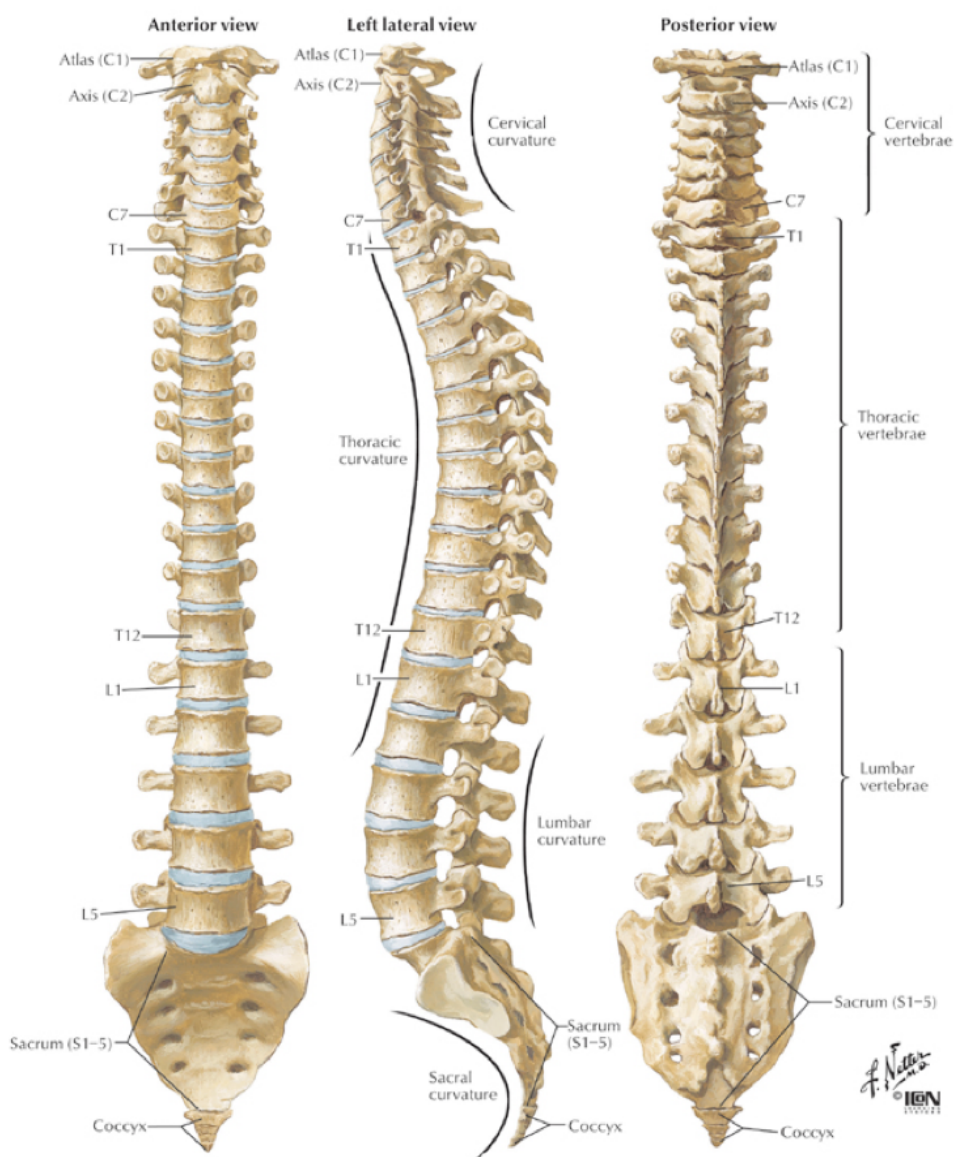


Lifeline: Sushumna (=sacred stream)

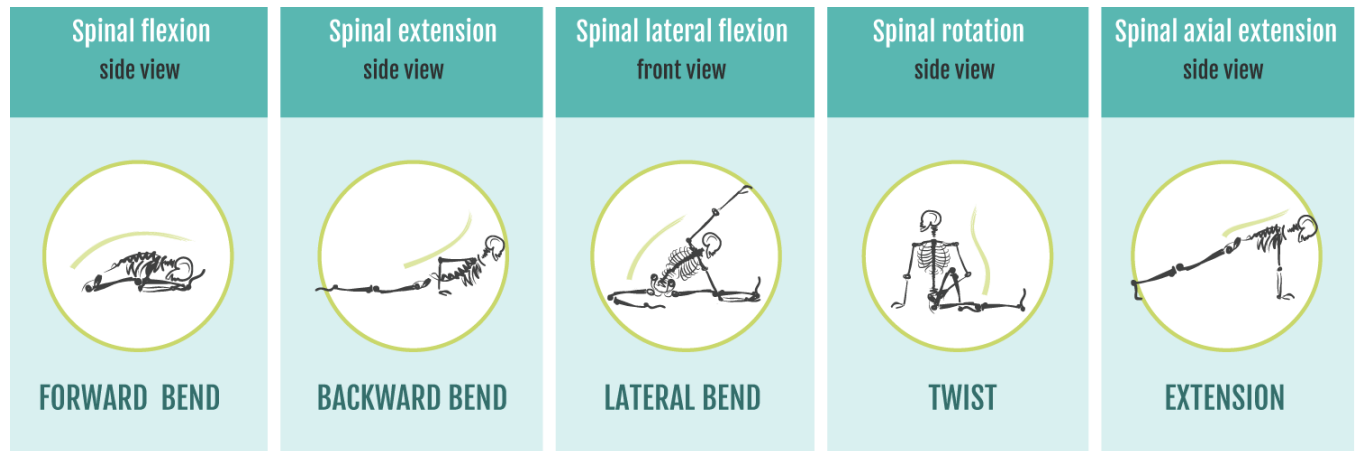
Physiologically, the importance of our spine can not be overestimated: it keeps us upright and connects different parts of our skeleton to each other, such as the head, chest, pelvis, shoulders, arms and legs. The spine also surrounds and protects the spinal cord - column of nerve fibers responsible for sending and receiving messages from the brain. It is through the spinal cord and its branching nerves that the brain influences the rest of the body, controlling movement and organ function.

Esoterically, spine carries a profound meaning in the yoga tradition. Our spine is the main energetic pathway - along which flows the highest concentration of life force. Spine is a major pathway for *kundalini* - consciousness itself. That is why the Sanskrit term for human spine is *sushumna* = sacred stream...

For the health of spinal column (a.k.a. balance of stability & flexibility), it is necessary to maintain the integrity of it's curvature by strengthening muscles which support and move the spine, as well as moving it in all directions possible (7 total).



Below are directions of spinal movement (top row), and category of poses these movements are practiced in (bottom row):



1

2

3-4 (right+left)

5-6 (right+left)

7 (up)

7 movements all together, with spinal axial extension being the "backbone" of all others.

Because of tremendous importance of spine and the role it plays in our health (physical, mental, and spiritual), approach to asana in CHILD OF PRANA program is centered on safety, integrity, and freedom of spinal column. Movements of extremities (legs and arms) are secondary to the primary intention of strengthening and lengthening the spine in order to keep this pranic highway (*sushumna* = sacred stream) free of any obstructions.

Asana was created to help us breathe better, so we are better connected to our mind (mind follows energy (=breath) and vice versa).

Then via combination of asana and breath we access particular *prana vayu* - with which we can influence the state of our mind. Because the "way we see the world is not how it is, but how we are", rather, the quality of energy we hold. **WE ARE AS WE FEEL**. If the digestion is sluggish, we feel sluggish and see things as heavy. If the mind is confused, we see life as confusing. If the mind is calm we see life as peaceful...

All poses of Hatha yoga can be grouped into 6 main categories, according to physiological movements of the spine and which prana vayu is affected by the pose (+vayus in parentheses are secondary affected, after the main vayu listed first):

Category of Asana	Spinal movement	Prana vayu(s) affected
Forward Bends	flexion	apana (+samana)
Twists	rotation	samana (+apana)
Laterals	lateral (left/right) flexion	vyana (+prana)
Backbends	extension	prana (+vyana, udana)
Inversions	upside down (complete reversal of gravity's effect)	udana (+apana, vyana)
Extensions	axial extension (straight up from root to top)	Udana (+apana/prana)

If we look closely, the order of this grouping reflects 7-stage SUN-MOON-FIRE progression of Hatha Yoga:

PRELIMINARY (Purification + Strengthening):

apana + samana

MOON (Calm + Stability):

apana + samana

SUN (Pranic Awareness + Expansion):

vyana + prana

prana + vyana + udana

FIRE (Illumination):

udana

What's more, locations of these 5 vayus in the body correspond to chakras (major energy vortexes along the spine). What are chakras? *Chakra* = wheel. They are confluences of pranic rivers (*nadis*) that flow throughout the body and intercept each other at various points. There is a chakra virtually at every joint! And the largest ones intercept at various points in the spine... See Chakras document later in the training.

