

Ayurveda: Doshas

Mind-Body Constitutions and their importance and relevance to you (personally) and to personal and work relationships for success

As I've already mentioned in the introduction to Ayurveda, there are three different types of mind-body constitutions which mirror the elements found in the universe. If you recall, Ayurveda says that we are made up of all these elements, but that each of us has a propensity towards certain elements over others. This is what makes up the three basic mind-body constitutions known as Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

So, understanding your own Dosha and knowing the typical reactions of yourself and someone who is a Kapha constitution, for example, who is in the Pitta phase of life is very helpful in understanding and responding to them successfully.

Ayurveda also recognizes that, along with our personal Dosha, our life cycle is associated with a specific Dosha depending on our age. From birth to puberty the Kapha Dosha is predominant, puberty to menopause the Pitta Dosha is predominant and from menopause through old age the Vata Dosha is predominant. These factors are taken into account along with one's personal Dosha and the information used to assist in maintaining balance within a person for life.

It's important to note that the functions of Vata, Pitta and Kapha are not tangible concepts but rather relate to the 'force' that each of the elements associated with the concepts provides to the functions of the body.

Vata Dosha – Ether & Air

A Vata constitution will include more of the nature elements of air and ether. Vata's main function is related to the nervous system and all movement within the body.

Qualities of People with Vata Dosha:

Vata people are generally very slim or slender, either short or tall with prominent bones. Other physical characteristics are an oval face, small eyes, dry skin, thin hair, small joints and long fingers. Because variability is specific to a Vata Dosha, metabolism and sleep patterns may be very changeable.

They often talk and walk a lot and when out of balance may complain a lot. They use hand gestures frequently and will talk with their hands. They are most often intuitive, imaginative and artistic. They are good at writing poems, creating art, or dancing. They are always on the go and truly love traveling.

The Vata mind is a very busy mind and this will be noticed in the types of conversation one has with a Vata Dosha person. They are naturally born worriers and often feel anxious and nervous. Vata Dosha people are likely to live with their minds in the future, and find it hard to ground in the present moment. They often change their minds in quick succession, which can be a rather frustrating trait of this Dosha type. *(Example of Claire)*

Qualities of People with Vata Imbalances:

The main qualities of a Vata Dosha are the following: dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile, and clear. So, when Vata Doshas are out of balance they may encounter some of the following situations: bloating, dehydration, light-headedness, a restless mind, weight loss, poor circulation, asthma, a feeling of cold, skin roughness, anxiety and insecurity, a racing mind, and compulsivity.

Pitta Dosha – Fire & Water

A Pitta constitution will include more of the nature elements of fire and some water. Pitta's main function in the body is related to transformation of both thoughts in the mind and physical digestion down to a cellular level, and is also related to the enzymatic and endocrine systems.

Qualities of People with Pitta Dosha:

Pitta people are of medium build and height, with strong muscles. Pitta Doshas have very sharp personalities and are of high intelligence. They will often have a sharp nose, eyes and chin and when out of balance unfortunately a sharp tongue. They also have a tendency towards a receding hairline and early graying or balding.

Pitta people are good speakers. They speak to the point and don't sugar coat conversations. They are very precise, goal seeking, orderly and tidy. Pitta people are list makers; they can't do anything unless planned, and they're always on time.

The Pitta Dosha's mind is very goal oriented and they are mostly grounded in the present and can be very witty people. Pitta Doshas have tendencies towards being opinionated, and can be critical if not of others, of themselves. Pitta's generally want things to go their way.

Qualities of People with Pitta Imbalances:

The main qualities of the Pitta Dosha are: sharp, hot, light, acidic, mobile and liquid. As such they may be prone to the following imbalances: heartburn, anger, sharp headaches and pain, fevers, inflammation, excessive perspiration, sensitivity to heat, ringing in ears, and dizziness.

Kapha Dosha – Earth & Water

A Kapha constitution will include more of the nature elements of earth and water. Kapha's main function is to provide stability and connections within the body, and is related to the tissues and wastes of the body.

Qualities of People with Kapha Dosha:

Kapha people tend to be full – bodied. They have rounded features and usually have long, thick hair.

Kapha people are loving, nurturing, caring and are peacemakers. They want everybody to be happy. They have good endurance and a strong immune system. They are good listeners and speak very little. At times, they tend to be shy. Kapha people tend to gain weight. Kapha Doshas prefer to rely on others and tend to be followers and they also tend to be a little lazy. Kapha Dosha minds have a tendency to daydreaming and often spend time in thoughts about the past. They also get attached very quickly to people and things and have a hard time letting go.

Qualities of People with Kapha Imbalances:

The main qualities of the Kapha Dosha are: cold, heavy, static, soft and liquid. As such they have a tendency towards the following when out of balance: colds, congestion, sinus issues, obesity, food allergies, lethargy, swollen joints and slow thinking.

Doshas Wrap-up:

As I've discussed, the concept of Doshas in the ancient science of Ayurveda relates to psycho-physiological (Mind-Body) Constitutional makeup of each person. We've already looked at the specifics of each Dosha, but to conclude, I want to remind you of some of the most common aspects about each Dosha so that you might be able you identify why some people are prone to certain behavioral tendencies more so than others. Hopefully, you'll find these explanations helpful in understanding how to react to different employees and family members.

Vata people will have anxiety and insecurity tendencies and may often be fearful in situations where others are not. Their first reaction to something new may well be fearful and sometimes they lack stability. These are the family members and employees who move too quickly, are quite restless when expected to sit still and may experience ‘test-taking’ anxiety when faced with presentations and the like. Vata family members and employees will also be the people who need constant affirmation from you – in other words they are always needing your approval to feel validated and successful. They may also feel the effects of overwork (and over-exercise) before other body constitutions, but they also have tendencies to overextend themselves. They will however, be the more flexible and adaptable than other Dosha types.

Yoga for Vata Dosha types: All yoga works for all people, but to stabilize and balance the Vata Dosha type there are certain poses and ways to do poses that will help maintain a balance in the Vata Dosha type.

If you are predominately a Vata Dosha type then please consider the following advice as regards a yoga practice:

Firstly, both calming and grounding poses are very important to balance the elemental qualities of air and ether that make up the Vata Dosha type.

Vata Dosha types should also be aware that when doing any flow yoga class or when moving and transitioning between different yoga poses, they should be mindful to do this deliberately and intentionally. As fast movements will aggravate this Dosha type.

Also, the seat of Vata is found in the lower back and thighs, so poses that compress the pelvis are helpful to Vata Dosha types – all forward bends are useful to Vata Dosha types. The Warrior Series is also a good series for this Dosha types.

Savasana, is an excellent pose for Vata Dosha types – particularly longer periods of time in this pose than other Dosha types.

Pitta people will be very goal oriented. They will be the leaders in your household or in your employ. They will always give their opinion and may be quite critical of you if you don't follow through on things you've said will happen. However, watch them for being far too self-critical as well. They may well push themselves too hard because of their sheer determination (they don't have the same stamina levels of the Kapha Dosha), so the overworked executive who suddenly collapses from a heart attack is a good example of an overworked Pitta. They may not be the most compassionate of people although they are very convincing so watch this Dosha type for not being able to always see other's points of view.

Yoga for Pitta Dosha types: All yoga works for all people, but to stabilize and balance the Pitta Dosha type there are certain poses and ways to do poses that will help maintain a balance in the Pitta Dosha type.

A calm, relaxed, non-competitive approach to yoga is very important for this Dosha type. As excessive heat is to be avoided by Pitta Dosha types, cooling poses are important, and avoiding heated yoga classes is very important too.

Focus on the solar plexus – opening the chest like cobra, pigeon, fish, bridge poses are good for Pitta Dosha types. Also, hip opening poses like tree, warrior and half-moon are good poses for Pitta Dosha types.

When entering Savasana make sure that you quietly focus on your breath to calm your mind and center your body and heart.

Kapha people tend to be more emotional than the other Dosha types. They will be slower at assimilating new tasks or concepts, but they are great at retaining what they have learned. They have the highest level of endurance of all the Dosha types, but because of their tendency towards laziness, this may not show. This Dosha type will also prefer to work in association with others and are quite happy to accept things for the way that they are. They are the most stable of the Dosha types, but this can also lead to stagnation. They also get attached very quickly to people and things

and have a hard time letting go, so if you are a changing course or direction with a project or initiative, Kapha Dosha people find it hard to change with you – you will need to prepare them for this ahead of time so that they can be successful with the transition. Interestingly, they enjoy creating things so they may form establishments and institutions – as they love making things useful.

Yoga for Kapha Dosha types: All yoga works for all people, but to stabilize and balance the Kapha Dosha type there are certain poses and ways to do poses that will help maintain a balance in the Kapha Dosha type.

As you are aware the Kapha Dosha type has a tendency for lethargy and weight gain. As such, when practicing yoga, its advised that Kapha Dosha types make the most of flowing through yoga poses and also creating heat through the poses. Kapha Dosha types may enjoy all yoga poses, but flow yoga classes are ideal to increase heat in the body so these types of classes may be a great choice for Kapha body types.

The above information is given in the hopes that it will be useful to you in understanding how to interact with family members, employees and in understanding yourself, to enhance your success in both your personal and work life.

Remember, that even if someone exhibits the qualities of a specific Dosha, we are all uniquely different, and in balance, each of these Dosha's brings amazing benefits to a team and having team members with the different qualities will bring strength to any situation.

Also, I want to remind you to be kind to yourself; these concepts will take time to assimilate into your awareness – the goal here is NOT to stress you out, but to give you added tools to support a happier, more successful leadership role by understanding yourself and those with whom you work and live each day. So, take your time with these concepts and enjoy using them for your success.