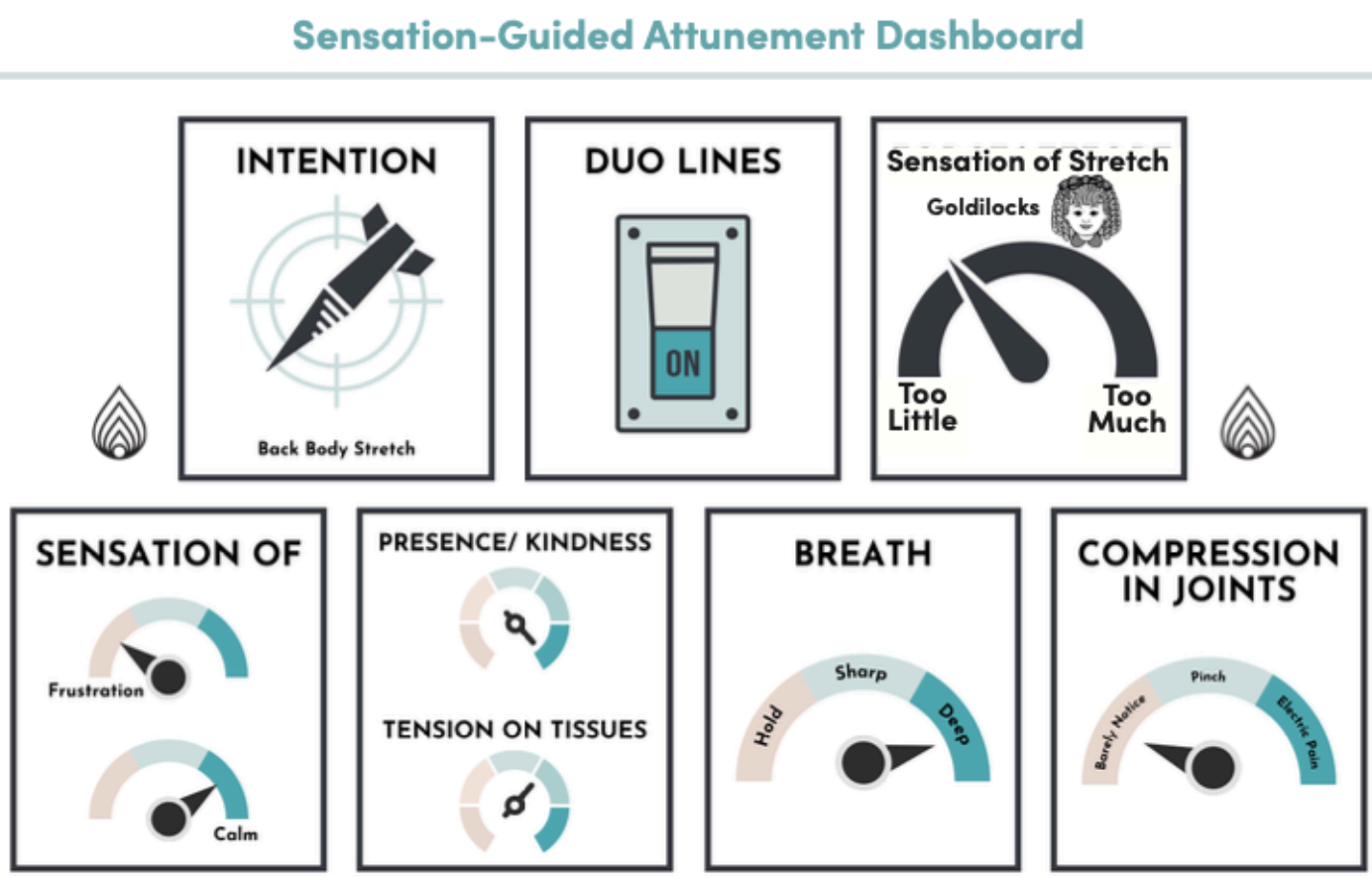

Figure 1-9-1

Figure 1-9-2 shows some of the sensations we want to become aware of and learn how to guide. Notice that some are about mechanical sensations, some are about feelings.

Mechanical Sensations: Tension & Compression

This chapter is about attuning to and guiding sensations of physical or mechanical forces. The next chapter will be about how to work with sensing and steering emotions in the body.

Practicing yoga without pressure indicators for these mechanical forces is like riding a motorcycle with no gas gauges, speedometers, or steering wheels. Without this awareness on our mats, our risk of injury increases as the precision of the practice decreases. We hit the target, but we miss the bullseye.

The tension we want to experience in yoga should feel like a stretch in both our muscles and fascia. Compression feels like a pinch in our joints. Once you learn how to interpret these sensations, you can guide your body away from neck, shoulder, wrist, lower back, knee, and hip pain. This ability to use tension and compression to improve the quality of our movements and to reduce or prevent pain is one of the significant aims of *Yoga Optimized*.

In Chapter 2, we examined how one of the primary reasons people get injured in yoga is that they misinterpret sensations in the practice. One of the most common reasons is mistaking the feeling of compression with tension.

As an example of misunderstood sensations, when people do "backbends" like *urdhva mukha svanasana*, I often ask them to point to the place on their body where they feel the stretch. Almost all of them put their fingers on their lower back. Many people even say they feel "a great stretch in their spine." These are faulty sensation gauges.

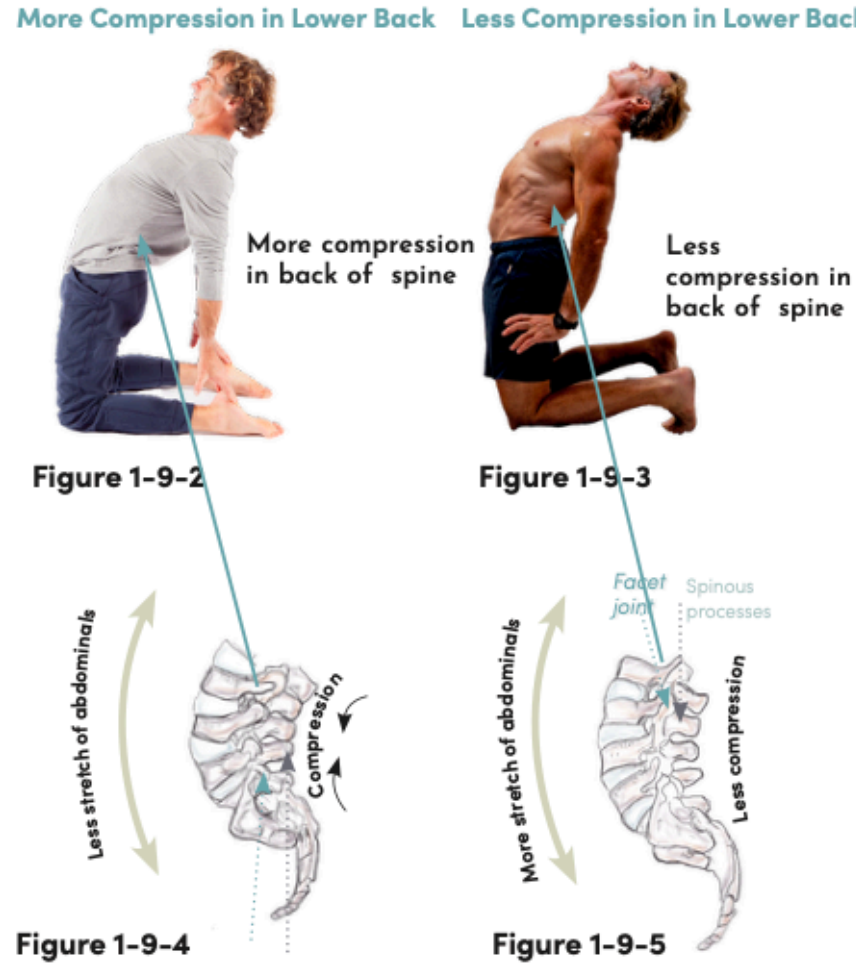

Figure 1-9-2 **Figure 1-9-3**

Figure 1-9-4 **Figure 1-9-5**

Compression in a "backbend" shows up as a pinch. Stretch shows up as tension (STRETCH) in the muscles of the front.

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