

# Can't sleep?

By Sandy and Jo

At the Southport conference several delegates admitted that they have trouble sleeping at night. Prison is a tough arena and it isn't easy to switch off the moment you fall into bed. So this page tackles insomnia.

Here's a common scenario. After a hard shift, you kick off the shoes, sink in front of the telly and relax with one or two drinks. Then you nod off in front of the box and when you come to, make yourself a cuppa to take to bed. Then you undress, clean your teeth and fall into bed feeling shattered – only to find that the mind starts racing as incidents or the night's viewing crop up on the mind screen. Aaaaaggh!

Already you have probably worked out some dangers lurking here. Too much booze is just a temporary narcotic, so make the second one your last and really enjoy every sip. Try to go to bed at the same time every night. The body programmes that time and loves regularity. Instead of anything with the mind-exciting caffeine drug – like tea, coffee, cocoa and chocolate – at bedtime try a little milk which releases fats in the brain which induce sleep.

If you always watch TV before bed, try not to watch over stimulating programmes. Treat yourself to something calmer and check out if this allows you to sleep better.

A warm bath or shower can really help relax the body. When you sink under the sheets, you can continue to ease out tension by taking your awareness to every part of your body – including your face – and consciously tensing and relaxing the muscle groups. The body will feel more ready for rest.

If after that your mind is still buzzing, try to accept yourself just as you are. A buzzing mind is quite common, just like insomnia. Neither is harmful although they are distressing. So accepting you are normal, giving yourself permission to be normal is a good start to not worrying about it. Loss of sleep doesn't matter much since the body is clever enough to sleep when it is really tired. Even a couple of hours are helpful and resting the body in a supine position lets the body feed on this rest.

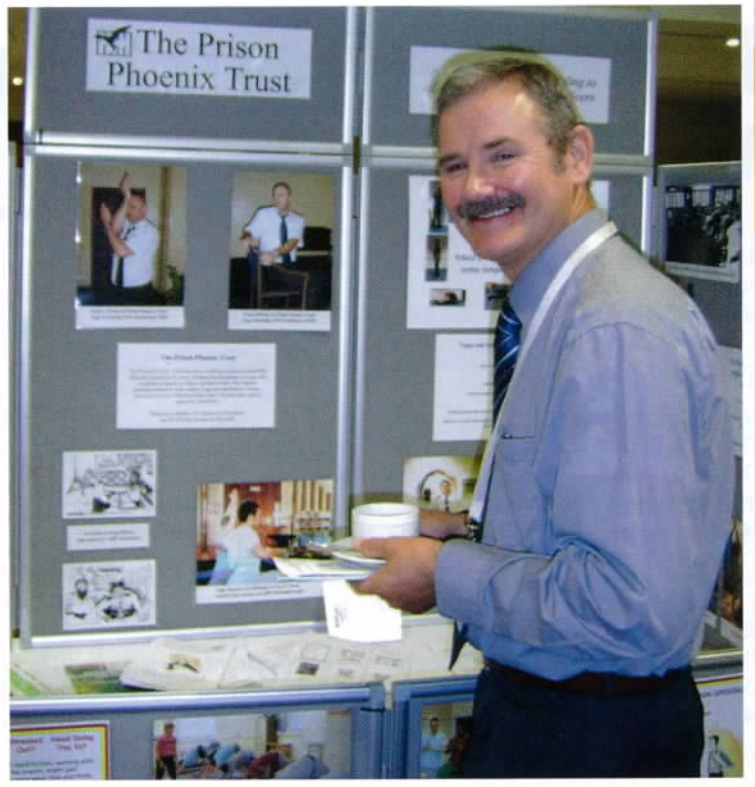
Don't try to stop your thoughts. Simply let them float in and out of your mind. At the same time, begin to observe your breathing, in and out through the nose, without trying to change its natural rhythm. Breathing through the nose helps in all kinds of ways – even if it feels strange – including lessening snoring!

Then...

Place the right hand on the belly just above the navel and the left hand over the centre of the chest. The right hand will move up with inhalation and down with exhalation. The left hand should not move with the breath. There should be no tension in the abdomen (belly). Don't try to force the movement in any way. Try not to expand the chest or move the shoulders. Simply feel the abdomen expanding and contracting. Continue breathing slowly and deeply.

When you feel quite comfortable, continue and if you wish, release your hands. When you breathe out count one and let the next in breath come in.

Continue counting up to ten, then start again. Then zzzzz...



Paul Ash, Branch Chair, HMP Blundeston, at the Prison Phoenix Trust staff at Annual Conference.

## About the PPT

The Prison Phoenix Trust encourages prisoners and prison officers in their spiritual lives through the practices of yoga and meditation. The PPT recommends simple yoga stretches sensitively tailored to the students' needs, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation where students focus on their breath. Keeping the attention on the silence in the breath offers students ultimate peace of mind, which is the goal of ancient yoga, as well as a safe and calming practice.

We offer support through classes, workshops, correspondence, free books and CDs, and newsletters.

If you would like any of these resources, contact The Prison Phoenix Trust, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF Email: [all@theppt.org.uk](mailto:all@theppt.org.uk) [www.theppt.org.uk](http://www.theppt.org.uk)



## POA 25 year awards

A presentation and buffet took place at HMP New Hall on Friday 3rd April to mark 25 years or more of POA membership. National Chairman Colin Moses, General Secretary Brian Caton and Area Rep Joe Simpson were there to present certificates. Pictured with certificates are Norman Davidson, Rob Bowman, Carol Gledhill, Anita Archer, Karen Gee, Jan Grey, Paul Tingle, Terry Malley, Gaynor Williams, John Shaw and Tony Fox.

Also receiving certificates but not present were Pete Fenlon, Dave Pratt, Dave Lynn, Vena Jenkinson, Lin Fynamore, Brian Tudor, Ron Perfect and Sandra Rodenhurst.

