

Newsletter, Autumn 2019

RETREAT!!!

Arranging for a visit. Worrying about your parents, partner or children. Trying to get the job you want. Working your case out with your solicitor. Negotiating your way past the madness of the drug culture. Trying to get along with your padmate. Getting on the right course. Struggling with an IPP sentence. Supporting a friend having a hard time.

Sometimes it can seem like the week is just a series of difficult tasks.

And when things seem overwhelming, retreating might be the wisest action. People who've served in the armed forces know this: in battle, when your side is almost surrounded, retreat is one obvious choice. Of course, retreat also has the meaning of stopping your normal activity in the world and turning inward for a time, often some days or years even, to focus on your spirituality.

So many people in prison have found a sense of refuge and retreat in meditation and yoga, focussing on silence and the breath. They say that retreating for a short time each day with these practices, their anxiety is less, they feel happier and less alone, and they can handle setbacks more easily. John on page 2 says he's remembered what a smile feels like.

Some people in prison choose to retreat by doing two or more hours of yoga and / or meditation each day. That's wonderful if you can make it happen: keep going if that's you! More realistic for most of us is committing between 10 minutes and an hour to practising. Clifford on page 2 says that he does it in several 15 minute batches each day. During the time you set aside, the demands of your life may still pop into your mind, but because

you are training your attention to return to the body and breath when it wanders, the troubling things tend to quieten down.

It isn't just that you are letting bothersome stuff go. When you do this you are also adjusting your whole outlook. In normal life,

you usually need to get things done, achieve something, fight for what's right, figure things out. This can lead to a strong sense of being in opposition to the world: it's outside of me, it's a certain way, and I need to change it, or change myself, to make things the way I need or want them to be.

With meditation and yoga, you can let go of striving, becoming or achieving. There's no need to win, or to decide, or to make anything happen. Yes, you need to set aside the time to practise,

and you need to have a clear idea of the basics of what you're doing. But beyond that, you don't need to bring any notions of achievement or change. It is about orienting to something else beyond the details of your life situation, and about being with exactly how things are. It is about being incredibly simple, quiet, content and open in your heart and mind.

Ironically, that reorientation can lead to more creativity – even enjoyment – as you emerge to do all the things you need to. Then maybe retreating each day comes to seem less like running from a battle, and more like returning home, where you know that you've already got exactly what you need.



**The Sage and the Tortoise,
from a friend in a secure hospital**

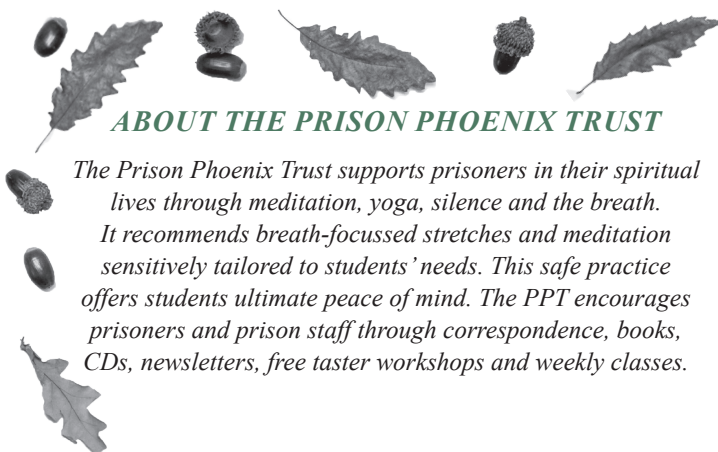


**Love from Sam - and Lucy, Sally, Jason,
Clive, David, Laura, Victoria & Brent**



**“The stream of life that runs
through my veins night and
day runs through the world.”**

*~ Rabindranath Tagore, Indian poet, musician
and artist (1861 - 1941)*



ABOUT THE PRISON PHOENIX TRUST

The Prison Phoenix Trust supports prisoners in their spiritual lives through meditation, yoga, silence and the breath. It recommends breath-focussed stretches and meditation sensitively tailored to students' needs. This safe practice offers students ultimate peace of mind. The PPT encourages prisoners and prison staff through correspondence, books, CDs, newsletters, free taster workshops and weekly classes.



From
HMP Sudbury

Random acts of kindness circle back around. I read a book that floored me with a piece of advice: if you want something, give your most prized possessions away!

I had only two items in my cell that were of value, in terms of getting me through each day: a DVD player and my DAB radio. Could I really give them up?

With no money being sent in, I decided to test the theory and gave away both items to prisoners I didn't know.

In the following days, with nothing else to do, I read more books, did more yoga, meditated more, wrote more letters to friends and family, and started drawing pictures and making cards that I could post out in a free envelope to loved ones on birthdays. I felt better for my decision, when I thought I would feel worse.

Then out of the blue, a guy who had played guitar for years bought a new one. I commented on the beauty of his new instrument and said I had always wanted to learn to play. I had never seen this guy before, but ten minutes later he knocked on my door and handed over his old guitar and said it was mine – no charge!

From
HMP Littlehey

Freeing the Spirit and the CD are both really helpful.

I like your remark about changes happening without people noticing. I'm hanging on to that to remain positive even when I feel no apparent changes.

I'm still doing 15 minutes of yoga and 15 minutes of meditation every morning but will increase my time for both in the next few months. Having said that, I will not increase the times by much because I would like to maintain whatever times I dedicate to both even when I get out of



prison. I know I'm a lot more constrained for time on the outside than I am in here, so a bit of realistic scheduling is important.

I've also started attending the weekly yoga classes here every Wednesday. It is great because the yoga teacher introduces some yoga poses which are actually very beneficial to loosening up my joints and muscles. I always feel fantastic after each session.



From
HMP Manchester

My meditation practice has changed very little over the years.

I'm an advocate for mindfulness, sitting or laying in the corpse pose focussing on my breathing, and in turn the present moment. I do this every morning and evening.

This practice has slowed and calmed me down. I've also become less judgemental and quicker to let my guard down, welcoming people with a warm smile instead of a frown.

My current pad mate is a practising Muslim, and as it's Ramadan at the moment he's fasting. Out of empathy, love and respect for a fellow believer in God or spiritual warrior, I chose to join him and fast on Wednesday. All I can say is that it changed me – put me on another level, or tore a few layers off the onion perhaps. When hunger or thirst struck, I thought and empathised with people starving in the world. At moments like this, my connection with the "here and now" was very profound.

My pad mate told me the next day that he could see the spirit shining through me.

I really took a lot from it, and I'm going to do it for the next two Wednesdays of Ramadan as well.

My parole date is next month. I've done all I can in the form of rehabilitation, so all being well I will be out soon. If not, I will help who I can during my final year here.

From Way Of Yoga, a Facebook page by a former prisoner which encourages others to practise yoga in prison.

In a village there lived two boys. One boy's body was always covered with fruits and whenever a fruit had been picked, another grew. The other boy's body was covered with big sharp spikes.

The boy with the spikes said, "Are you not afraid people will pick your fruit?"

"No I am not afraid, the fruits are there for them to have," said the other.

"What happens if someone comes and picks all your fruits?" asked the boy with the spikes.

"Nothing. I will grow more fruits and the person who took them will start to grow fruits as well."

The boy with the spikes understood. He smiled and a spike fell off permanently.

Prisoners'

From
HMP Dovegate



They started a yoga class here some months ago and the lady who takes it had some forms to send off

for your books.

I'm an older guy in my late 50's and pretty cynical in general but I've got to admit I'm impressed with what you teach. I've been closed off for years – keeping people at a distance, trying not to feel much and succeeding. But I've rediscovered what a smile feels like and how good it feels to just breathe. Thank you for taking the time to bring some very positive energy into where people can get lost and forgotten.

I'd be really grateful if you'd accept a donation I'd like to make. Maybe it'll help provide a few more books and CDs to those in need. It's not money that's come easy to me, but what I've had to work and save hard for. I only say this to try and show how amazed I am that people do what you do. I know from first hand experience that if you can put a smile and a spring in my step for someone like me then you're doing good things for people who need some positivity in their lives.

From
HMP Bure

I have been lent a copy of *Peace Inside*, but soon it will be time to return it to its kindly lender. It could prove to be a very useful reference to fine tune my meditation practice.

For the first four and a half years here, I had the benefit of a weekly meditation group, but the powers that be decided it was a waste of my time so I now sort crap (sometimes literally) in the prisons recycling plant. We do a good job, achieving recycling rates of better than 80%. I meditate daily in 15 minute batches – in the morning before work, at lunchtime bang up and before bed. So, 45 minutes per day.

As a Quaker I also get an afternoon off for communal worship each week. Some shared silence "in the manner of friends" but interrupted by much interesting ministry.

Fast approaching 60, I use yoga to stretch out before and after the gym, and



Letters



to deal with stiffness after work, both from the physical strain of the heavy jobs and the repetitive strain of standing in the same place, on an uneven floor, often for an hour at a time. The Sun Salutation, brilliantly illustrated in *Freeing the Spirit*, is an ideal stretch.

With less guidance, my meditation practice has got a little ragged at the edges, but remains effective at preventing the chronic brain race that plagued me at the start of my stretch. Perhaps more importantly, loving kindness meditation continues to underpin respectful relationships with difficult inmates and staff.

The problem that has developed is that I now struggle to gain the motivation to get tasks started for several months. I have had the option of organising a visit with

someone I want to meet. Only a couple of short letters and a “VO” required, but on every attempt emotional lock-up occurs. Meditation deals with the emotional bit but puts the task off until tomorrow. Ideas please?

On a personal note I have come to realise that my mother caring for my father with advanced dementia is far more of a prisoner than myself. Respite care is limited to two hours a week due to austerity, which is barely enough time to get to the shops and back.

Ed: The emotional lock-up when trying to organise that visit sounds hard: you really want to make it happen, but something stops you!

It may be that there's a part of you that says, "You don't have the right to do it," or "You shouldn't be doing it," like a gatekeeper who won't let you pass. Sometimes we should listen to our internal gatekeepers: maybe they're protecting us from harm. But often they are voices of

fear, an inner critic, or of social norms we've internalised. It may be useful to set aside some time to have a dialogue with that part of you which is saying no, with you playing both gate keeper and wise Clifford, maybe even changing where you sit as you switch between the roles. This might sound wacky, but it's just bringing out into the open the internal chat most of us do all the time, but usually without awareness.

Even as your dilemma goes on, don't abandon the approach you are familiar with: daily meditation when you can let go of back-and-forth reasoning and sink simply into being the breath. And of course, nothing beats talking with someone you like and trust, maybe someone in your Quaker meeting group.

Check out the yoga and meditation column each month in Inside Time.

Meditation Corner

To Infinity and Beyond



By Jason

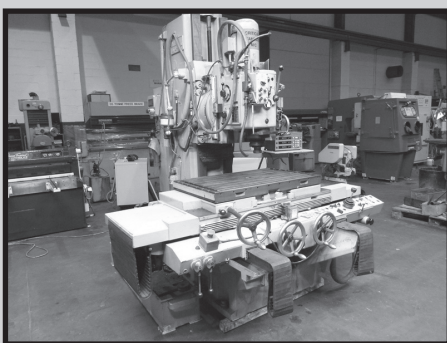
When I left school at 17, I started an apprenticeship as a toolmaker. I stayed with this job for the next 20 years, going back and forth to the factory, working shifts, clocking in and out. I was part of a regime that shaped my life and was predictable. I can still remember the smell of the cutting oil, the noise from the metal-cutting machinery, and the banks of switches and controls I had to adjust. I remember the nooks and crannies of the factory, and in particular a tally of dates scratched into the wall behind one of the milling machines. Eric, who had operated the same machine for most of his adult life, had kept this

countdown of dates until he could retire, patiently marking off the weeks over many years. I'm not sure what happened to him after he reached 65, but it was an event he had possibly dreamt about since he was an apprentice. This was a sobering thought at the time: I wondered how long this work would stretch before me.

Prisons are clearly different places from factories, but maybe you recognise the routines and this type of daydreaming about things to come. Perhaps you have counted down the days to release, or to a parole hearing, to your next visit, or even just the hours until your cell is opened again. Maybe you have scratched the weeks, days and hours into a wall or into your thoughts. Yearning for something different is something our minds do all the time, and finding some sort of pattern can bring a sense of control – at least for a short while until we move onto the next thing we're waiting for. This process can be never-ending, as most people would love to control every aspect of their life - with the nagging doubt that this can never actually be possible.

Instead of yearning for the future and marking time, there is another way to find

peace and predictability. The trick is not to look into the future or dwell on the past, but to broaden your vision laterally. This is much easier to experience than explain, and so right where you are, sit perfectly still, upright and completely focussed upon your breath. Almost immediately you will become aware of things happening right now, some of which may be annoying, such as noise or other disturbances. You may start to feel anxious or try to work something out. As soon as you notice this happening, just return to your breathing again. Each time you return to the breath, your experience of what is occurring right now will broaden, and gradually you will be able to tolerate the disturbances. Be patient and keep returning to the breath. Maybe you notice that worrying about the future becomes less important, and that the past is really your mind generating memories each moment. All this can be safely let go of, and by doing so our vision broadens to accept more of what is happening right now. Where we are now actually stretches to infinity and beyond, and so does the peace that is inseparable from this. Just be patient, still and focussed.



Eric's milling machine



Small Moments of Beauty



From Michael

I found a booklet in my cell about yoga and meditation. I tried it and it worked. I'd hoped to follow it up when I got out but, like all good plans, it fell to pieces. I knew there was a seed there though, I just had to water it.

Beginning when I was 17, I did 22 years of criminality and drug use. By 39, I'd been to jail 20 times. A friend of mine I'd drunk and used with was on the wing when I turned up. He'd got 22 years for a drunken mistake where he'd killed his girlfriend, and my friend. That woke me up. And having had a taste of yoga four years before meant I knew what I had to do.

Even during the first session I really noticed a difference. Over the next weeks my posture got better, my sleep got better even though I was detoxing from drugs. Doing yoga was the best relief of the withdrawal symptoms. I'd get two or three hours of respite from detox pain after 45 minutes of yoga. Obviously if you're suffering, your legs are aching, you're not sleeping, your stomach's hurting, your bones are aching, and you do 45 minutes yoga and you feel brand new, you're going to keep doing that.

I now work with Buddhists helping people overcome addictions, anxiety and mental health problems. The answer is the body and the breath. That's how we train people to overcome this stuff. Yoga is perfect because it allows you to relax your body and it makes you more in touch with your breath. Breathing exercises are a calming form of meditation, ideal for anxiety.

Connected to everything

Just by noticing things like your mental state or how shallow your breathing is, you have the opportunity to address that. Noticing, to start off with, is the key.

Before I started doing yoga, my breathing was shallow and my posture was very slouched. I was doing a lot of weights, so my body was not relaxed at all. I had tense shoulders, and neck and I got a lot of migraines. When I started yoga I noticed how much tension I'd been carrying. It's eye opening to realise how closed up you've been. Even eight years on my body's still opening up around the chest – I don't think that'll ever end.

Through my childhood and upbringing, my chest was shut tight up like a clam. And then I started doing yoga and it opened a crack. And every yoga session opens it a bit more. And if something emotional happens in my personal life I can feel it wanting to shut. And it does to some degree. But it never clams right up again. It's like I've driven a wedge into it with my practice.

I didn't used to be aware of the small moments of beauty in life. I didn't really

"I've never felt more entirely myself than I do today"

see things like flowers. I remember looking through the bars of my cell one summer's day after I'd been practicing and there was a dandelion on this scrappy piece of grass outside my window. It was a beautiful moment, where the dandelion was speaking to me. Then I looked up and the fence, the bars, the sky – it was like a moment of absolute beauty where I felt connected to everything. It was so different to how isolated I'd been in my using. Whenever I see a dandelion now, I remember it.

The person who runs the recovery programme that I help out at has got an amazing three minute breathing practice that I use all the time, when I've got a craving for a cigarette or some chocolate. You just pay attention to your body, you pay attention to your breath, you just let the breath calm your thoughts. And you can do that anywhere. You don't need to be around birds and beauty. For me it's not always necessary to do a whole session of yoga or a whole session of meditation. I can just pause, and pay direct attention to three breaths and it's perfect.

You may never stop feeling anxious, but if you can keep awareness of anxiety then you'll be able to come to terms with it. It won't run your life. You will be in control, not the anxiety.

My whole life is completely different because of yoga and meditation. My relationships, whether that's friends, family or romantic relationships, have all improved. It's like a magnifying glass has been put on my awareness of my emotional states, my mental states,

and my actions. I now know when I do something that's not great that I have to go and rectify it, I have to apologise. Recently I was cycling and eating a chocolate bar. I was passing a skip, so I threw my wrapper at it. It missed and landed on the road. I cycled on for another five minutes but then I had to turn round to pick the wrapper up. It sounds very minor but I had to go back and put it in the skip. Otherwise I probably wouldn't have been able to sleep that night. It's about ethics. It's about being the person I want to be, whether people see me or not. Being in the world how I want to be in the world, not how other people see me or want me to be.

I definitely feel a lot calmer in myself. We talk about integration, which is pulling all the disparate parts of ourselves back in together. So your ducks are following in a line instead of running wild. I feel this more and more. I've never felt more entirely myself than I do today, compared to how I was, when I was just a mess. Now I'm happy with who I am and how I interact with the world. It's like my heart and my mind are in communication, but before they were cut off from each other. This separateness showed itself in addictive behaviour, in criminality – not thinking about any consequences. I knew that by burgling houses, that meant that people were going to suffer, but I just wouldn't let that thought touch my heart. Now the connection between the two is strong and it's getting stronger.

In my experience, growth is always painful, and it can be humiliating as well. You see how you were and you're humbled by that. But what comes out of that pain and that humiliation is something brighter, more vivid and more loving.

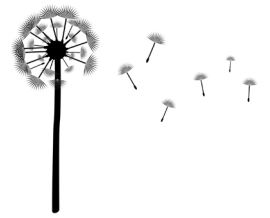
That's through yoga, meditation, and paying close attention to the consequences of my actions. That's what's worked for me and for many other people as well.



Where's that Mars bar wrapper?



The Breath as Your Ally



 By Brent

Ever wonder what effect your breath might have on your body, or on how you feel? This breathing practice will help you really experience the connection between breath, body and feeling. Imagine your body is a car: Breathing in is like pushing on the accelerator of a car. Breathing out is like pushing the brake pedal. Breathing in raises the heart rate and energises the body. Breathing out promotes relaxation.

In this exercise, you're making the out breath longer than the in-breath. It's intended to slow down your breathing rhythm. So you should, with practice, feel more relaxed. It's best to do it after yoga postures and movements, and before relaxation and meditation. You may find it makes your relaxation deeper, and that the quality of meditation is helped too. For this reason, it is really helpful to become intimate with your breath: make it your ally.

How do you do it?

- It works best if you breathe through the nose if you can, but breathe through your mouth if you have to.
- Sit upright, in a cross legged position on the floor, or upright on a chair or edge of your bed. Check your back and neck are aligned.
- When you're ready, breathe smoothly and deeply into the lower, middle and upper part of

your lungs.

- In your own time, breathe out. Towards the end of your out-breath gently pull your abdominal muscles towards your spine to lengthen that out breath.
- Then, to prepare to breathe in, relax your abdominal muscles and just let the breath flow into the lower, middle and upper part of your lungs, keeping your abdominal muscles soft.
- Breathe out again, and at the end of your out-breath gently pull your abdominal muscles in again, to extend your out-breath. Then relax your abdominal muscles as you begin to breathe in again.

Keep going at your own pace. Re-read the instructions until it starts to feel natural. If you get dizzy or if you feel uncomfortable, try doing it with less effort. It's also OK to stop and restart

again when you're ready.

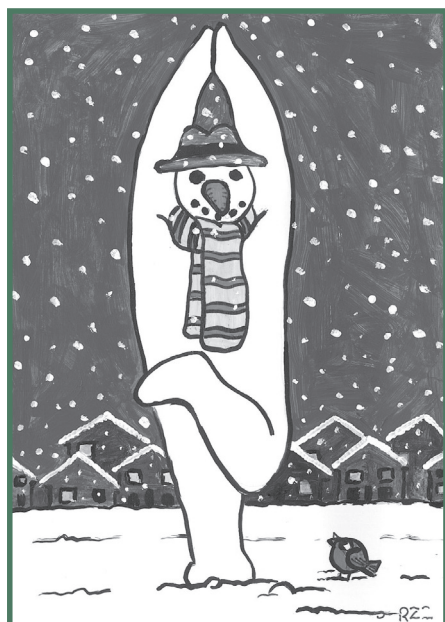
You can continue for as long as is comfortable. But why not start with about twelve breaths? You can use this any time to help you feel relaxed. I often lengthen my exhalation and deepen my inhalation before going to bed, and before meditation. Over some minutes (or over some days, practising a little bit each day) you may notice your breath becoming slower. This is a good thing! As your breathing slows you may notice feelings of relaxation, quiet and calm, a wonderful thing to feel. I encourage you to go with that feeling. Trust it.

As you progress you may begin to feel a natural pause when your lungs are full, before you breathe out. And a corresponding natural pause when your lungs are empty, before you breathe in again. Just notice it and notice how nothing is happening in that little pause. If you don't notice any natural pauses, that's okay too.

“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inwards in prayer for five short minutes.”

~ Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

Christmas Cards



This year our Christmas cards come in packs of five each of two designs, both drawn by a friend at HMP Grendon (144 x 103 mm). One of the cards is pictured left, the other is a winter woodland scene. The inside is left blank for your own message. You can see both designs in full colour on our website. To order, send the form to the right with payment to: The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF. If your prison is sending payment for you, you still need to send us the form.

Christmas Card Order Form

- Please send me _____ packs of cards at £5 per pack of 10
- I enclose a cheque payable to the Prison Phoenix Trust for £ _____

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

I've asked my prison to send you payment.



Going Deeper with the Dog



By Sam

The Downward-Facing Dog is a powerful posture that I include almost every time I practise yoga. It strengthens the arms and legs, stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves and hands. And it can really help calm you and reduce stress, especially when you do it as part of a sequence (like on p. 8). The pose we're suggesting you do afterwards (known as a counter pose) is the Child. In the Child, it's easy to rest and let all your muscles relax after you've done one or two Downward-Facing Dogs, especially on the out-breath – completely letting go.

WARM UP

Here are three things you can try to help you warm up. (You might find other or additional warm up movements that really work for you. Enjoy exploring!)

- If you haven't been moving much in the last few hours, get your blood going by walking in place for a minute, lifting your knees high and really swinging your arms high too. Walk as fast as you like.
- **Shoulder Rolls**
Breathing in, slowly lift your elbows in front of you 'til they point skywards. Breathing out, take the elbows behind you until they're pointing down again. Repeat 4 more times. Then change direction for 5 slow circles.



Walking the dog

Be on all fours, hands a little bit forward of shoulders, knees right under your hips. Take your hands a little wider than shoulder width. Spread the fingers as wide as possible, like a star fish.

Push firmly into your hands, lift your knees off the floor and straighten the legs more.

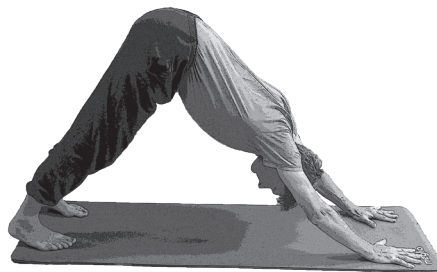


Bend one knee, stretching the heel of the other leg down as you breathe out slowly. Breathe in and come high up onto the balls of both feet. Breathe out and bend the other knee, stretching the opposite heel down. Keep going, moving with the breath, 10 times each side.



THE POSE

- Now, straighten both legs, and stretch both heels towards the floor. Stay here for a moment, just getting used to being here. Don't worry about too much detail if this is the first time you've done this. Just think about making an upside down "V" shape with your whole body.



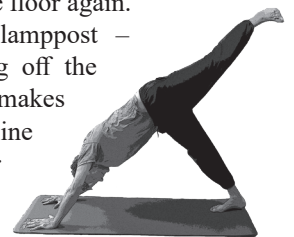
- Come down and rest in child pose whenever you want.
- If you're able to, build up to holding for 10 slow breaths (or longer if you wish).
- Think of three sets of magnets all pushing away from each other: one in your sitting bones, one in your hands, and one in your heels.
- Let your neck be in line with the rest of your spine.
- Keep your breath slow and steady and even.

ADAPTING IT

- If your hamstrings are tight, or you'd prefer not to put such pressure on your knees, have the knees bent a little bit.



- To deepen this stretch, come high up onto the balls of your feet (not trying to stretch the heels down for the moment). Then flatten your lower back as much as you can, drawing the crease where the top of your legs meets your pelvis, backwards. Then lower your heels towards the floor again.
- Dog and lamppost – lift one leg off the floor, so it makes a straight line with your torso.



CHILD

- Rest like this. If you can get your bum directly on your heels that's good too.



- If any variation of the child is tricky, rest on your back, knees over your chest.



- Let go of holding any muscles you don't need, especially when you breathe out. Face, legs, back, arms, as much of your body as you can – let it go. Stay for 10 long breaths.

Repeat Downward-Facing Dog again, if you want to. It's often better the second time! And then choose a good counter pose afterwards.

“I am always doing that which I can not do, in order that I may learn how to do it.”

~ Pablo Picasso, artist



Looking Towards Release

From HMP Standford Hill

I bumped into an old friend of mine a few years ago. I said, “They keep telling me in here that I’m an angry person.” And he said, “Yeah, you are.” I said, “I’m not, I don’t get into fights.” And he said, “Yeah, but look at the amount of complaints you used to put in. That was you being angry.” And I realised that I wasn’t as peaceful as I thought I was. The stress was still there.

I think the biggest thing I learnt was to have a little chuckle, shrug my shoulders, and just think “shit happens.” I’ve seen people getting stressed about inconsequential things. A lot of the stress I used to have in my life I put upon myself. Trying to be something I wasn’t, trying to be someone I wasn’t. I learnt to say to myself, “It’s not so much what happens, it’s how I deal with it that matters.”

If somebody upsets me, somebody says something I don’t like, I could punch him on the nose. That’s not going to get me out of prison any quicker. If I learn not to be bothered, or not to react to being bothered, by something I don’t like, then that’ll get me out of that situation quicker. Things are always going to upset you. The quickest way to deal with the stresses in prison is to put up with them so you can get out of prison.

I’ve spent years in closed conditions and I struggled coming to open prison. I went outside and there was this big open vista, and I realised I was agoraphobic. I’ve got to make my own routine now. I had my time dictated to me by the staff, by the doors being unlocked. Now, there’s none of that. But I don’t just sit in my cell worrying about the fact I’m in a cell. I’m happy, I’ve got my own space, I’m reading a book, I’m listening to the radio.

The person you want to be

Yoga’s a great way of getting rid of physical stress, and a lot of physical stress can come from mental stress, and can lead to mental stress. And meditation as well, just quietening down, just stopping that chattering monkey, all that garbage that’s going on in your head. A thought’ll pop up, but you don’t have to go with it. And it’s not just a thought that pops up – something happens, you don’t have to



Somewhere quieter...

react to it, deal with it. Someone swears at you or pushes in front of you in the queue, you don’t have to react to it. It’s a case of not letting other people dictate your actions. Not letting an impulse dictate what you do. Trying to be the person you want to be.

The stresses can be anything. Someone not answering their phone, someone playing music when you want to read a book. Trivial things that you normally take in your stride. And how I deal with it is to take three breaths. Just a little mini meditation like that. Take a few slow breaths and don’t react to that initial feeling. Let that die down a little bit before you want to react. Just remove yourself from the impulse so that you can see what’s really going on. And ask yourself, “Why do I feel this way, why do I want to react to this?” I often find myself thinking, “I hate this place.” And that’s not it – it’s just that I don’t like feeling the way I do.

The most difficult things about prison are not external; they’re all internal, in my own head. It’s worrying about the future, worrying about what’s going to happen when I go out. When I go out on a day release, I’m still anxious about that. I haven’t been outside a prison for a long time, and I’ve seen how much it’s changed just being in the sweatbox on the way here. So having to just go out there and be

out amongst the public... I’m not a great one for crowds. I never was, and in prison when you’re in a crowd – when you’re in a holding cell – something usually kicks off. It’s hot, it’s irritating, everyone’s a little bit edgy. So going out and being in a crowded place in public – it’s not in prison, I’ve got to try and get used to that mentality. It’s not so much what’s going to happen, it’s how I’m going to react, what I expect to happen. I hope I can just keep myself aware of where I am. And that if I do feel stressed somewhere that’s crowded, I’ll just go away somewhere quieter. And I know that I can do that.

A challenge I’m looking forward to

When you’re in a holding cell, there’s no way out. You’re locked in there. There could be 40 blokes locked into a fairly small room, and it’s a tense time, everyone’s irritated. Outside, that’s going to be different, but I’m still going to have that memory of the holding cells. Busy receptions, things like that. It’s going to be difficult, but it’s a challenge I’m looking forward to. I know I can get over that, and I can get used to being outside and not being a prisoner.





No Worries!

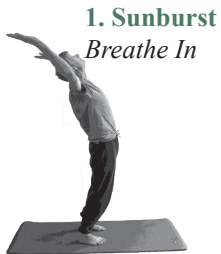


By Lucy

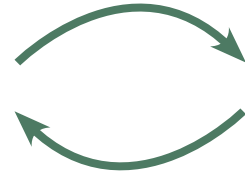


It is easy to let worrying take up your time and make you unhappy. There are so many things to worry about in life – from small things like not having the money to buy things you want or worrying about upsetting someone, to much bigger problems like a sentencing decision. What a lot of worrying situations have in common is that they're very difficult (or perhaps impossible) to change. However, we can always change our attitude to what is going on. Yoga helps to do that.

Through this routine, keep your breathing calm, deep and slow. If you can calm your breathing, your mind will soon follow. Pay attention to each breath. Enjoy the time you spend in these positions.



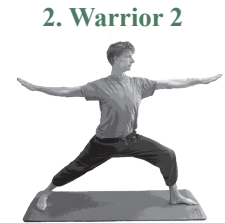
1. Sunburst
Breathe In



Flow between these two with the breath 10 times.



Breathe Out



2. Warrior 2

5 breaths each side.



3. Tree

5 breaths each side. Don't worry if you wobble – you can hold onto a wall.

4. Down Dog

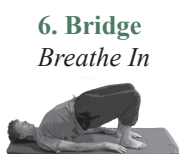


Stretch like this for 5 slow breaths. See page 6.

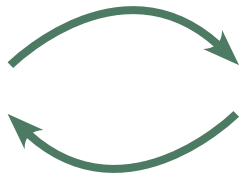


5. Child

Rest like this for 10 breaths.



6. Bridge
Breathe In



Flow up and down 3 times. The 3rd time you go up, stay up and hold for 5 slow breaths.



Breathe Out



7. Legs up

Stay for 20 breaths, or longer if you like.



8. Sitting

As you sit like this, be aware of your breathing. Let your breath be slow and unforced. As you breathe in, count up to five or six, or even seven. And when you breathe out, make the out-breath the same length. Keep going with each in-breath and each out-breath the same length. Continue for five minutes, gently bringing your attention back to the breath whenever it wanders away.



This newsletter goes to prisoners and prison staff, and to many friends who offer us their encouragement. We receive no statutory funding, but rely wholly on individuals, groups, grant making trusts and faith-based communities who understand the value of meditation and yoga, silence and the breath in empowering individuals and society to heal. Two important ways that friends can help are remembering us in their will and setting up a regular donation. Any support you can offer is greatly appreciated.

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