

PRISON PHOENIX TRUST

P.O. BOX 328, OXFORD, OX2 7HF

www.theppt.org.uk



Newsletter, Spring 2013



No SWEAT

It should have been dark. The roof and walls of the crowded lodge where we sat on the earth, sweating in a circle, did not let in a hint of daylight. But in a central shallow pit were 40 coconut-sized stones, and they were emitting light. Glowing, red hot, they had just come in on hay forks after hours in a wood fire outside. The man running this Native American sweat lodge introduced the stones as “Grandfathers,” bringing wisdom and help from the ages. The stones quickly heated the lodge, and when later they had water splashed onto them, steam shot into every pore.

During this spiritual purification ceremony, 20 of us spent four 30-minute rounds in the lodge with breaks in the cool outside air. Each round focussed on a different aspect of our inner world: gratitude, praying for loved ones in need, etc. And the power of each round was only possible because of the Ancestors fresh from the fire.

Outside help

The lodge master, like guides from all the world’s religions, said we cannot make progress on our spiritual path without help from outside. I am familiar with offering prayer in church. I know Tibetan Buddhists evoke certain deities to aid them, and that Siva, Krishna and Ram (among many others) are called upon by Hindus. But this sweat lodge, where the “outside help” had such an immediate physical presence, helped me understand that all spiritual practice is about giving up trying to do it on your own, and instead opening yourself to outside help.

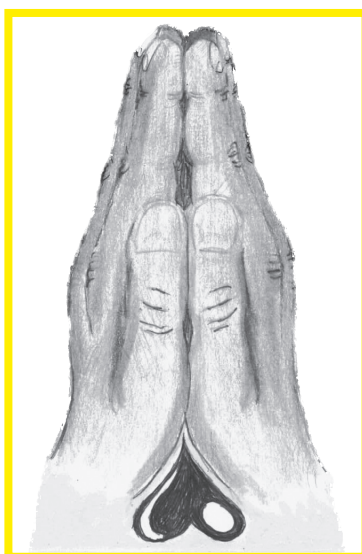
If you are doing meditation each day, it might seem that it is you who is the active force in meditation: *you* train your mind and your heart to stay with your in-breath and out-breath. When

attention drifts, *you* simply bring it back to the breath. But strange as it may sound, as you try to focus on the breath and forget about yourself, you open yourself up more to being helped.

Last week, Ron told me anxiously before a yoga and meditation class in his small local prison that he was really struggling because his methadone script had been cut from 60 mls to 40. For an hour and a half, he practised intently, returning repeatedly to focus on his breath, and letting go of all the stuff racing round his head. At the end, after sitting in silence with the group for five minutes, he said how much better he felt – calmer, more relaxed. I think Ron would be hard pressed to say what had helped him, but there was no doubt he would say he had been helped by letting go of himself and simply being with what was happening.

Lots of friends inside say they ask for help regularly, whether they are doing okay or feeling in a jam. It may be from Allah, God, Mother Nature, the Ancestors or someone whose wisdom they respect, even if they have never met them. When the asking is genuine, and with a sense of “I can’t do this alone,” we are able to let go of ourselves more and see that we are always being helped. What had seemed

like carrying boulders around is actually no sweat. Then, there is nothing to do but say “Thank you.”



Grateful for help all around
Drawn by a prisoner friend at
HMP Gartree



Love Sam – and Lucy, Sally, Jason,
Elaine, Clive, David, Kaye & Brent



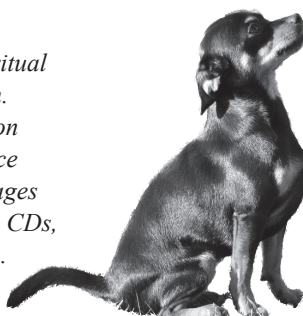
“What lies behind us, and what
lies before us are tiny matters
compared to what lies within us.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet (1803 - 1882)



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.



Contents

Page 2-3 Prisoners’ Letters
Page 3 Meditation Corner
Page 4 Back on Track
Page 5 Life on Release
Page 6 Prison Food
Page 7 Tribute to Bo
Page 8 Breathing Space



From HMP Wayland

Recently I've overcome my embarrassment and have been doing yoga outside while on exercise. Just having the grass and earth under my bare feet feels liberating. When my breath and mind are focussed nothing around me matters. I see infinite details in all that I look at and the feeling of peace, relaxation and release I get from half an hour's practice is magical and beats any drug I've ever done. I walk away with a spring in my step and a connection to everything and everyone around me.

Sometimes I feel selfish as I think that everyone should be feeling like I do. After venturing outside a few people have joined me, some temporary, but one comes day in, day out and we practise together. He teaches me Tai Chi and I teach him yoga. So after all I'm not totally alone. We've forged a strong friendship. He is also a Buddhist and we have a lot in common. I got told a long time ago that water finds its own level.

Recently I've been finding a balance in my life and the way I think. I've faced a few problems like my partner thinking of leaving me and doubting my potential to change. I've had a knock-back for funding for rehab on my release, and have faced difficult people on the wing. Instead of blowing my top or running away, I've dealt with these problems head on, calmly and rationally and have overcome all but the funding issue, which is getting

addressed as I write. I remain hopeful and wonder why it is not my time to go home (or rehab) now. "No snowflake falls in the wrong place" springs to mind. My yoga partner says the universe has different plans for me, so I continue to help people address their drug issues and, who knows, by staying in jail a little longer I may just save a life.

My mind has changed and I think differently, but my old addict mind keeps trying to sabotage me. But now I'm aware of its lying ways, I can now just tell it to go away and shut up every time it pokes its head up. Over time this is getting easier and less frequent. But it is still there lurking in the shadows, waiting for me to step off the path of recovery and spirituality that I'm walking. I think that with the hope I feel, along with constant practice, determination and patience I shan't ever wander off that path. If I do it won't be too far away before I notice and get back on it. It gives me great comfort that this new way of thinking and behaving is getting ingrained and the old ways slowly erased.

Yesterday I was told that if it wasn't for my help someone would've left this programme of recovery that I've done and now help on. That blew me away.

The universe, God or whatever, does move in mysterious ways and, you know what, now that I'm not trying to control the uncontrollable and letting things happen and unfold as they should, I've got a real sense of freedom, contentment and above all hope for whatever it has destined for me.

From HMP Featherstone



In the hope of having the day out for my little girl's fourth birthday, I put in for one day ROTL. You would think putting my app in seven weeks ahead of time on would give them time? But I only got the paperwork the day before and was told it's now going to take three weeks to sort it out. I should be full of anger but I think yoga and meditation have changed

Prisoners'

how I react to situations. I am sure I would have kicked off before.

From a prisoner



One year into a life sentence, I have been introduced to your weekly yoga session in my prison. Even though I'm only 21 and one of the youngest prisoners in here, I have experienced an inspirational change in my mind and body ever since taking part in this peaceful and happy way of life. I still have a long way to go and so much to learn and experience.

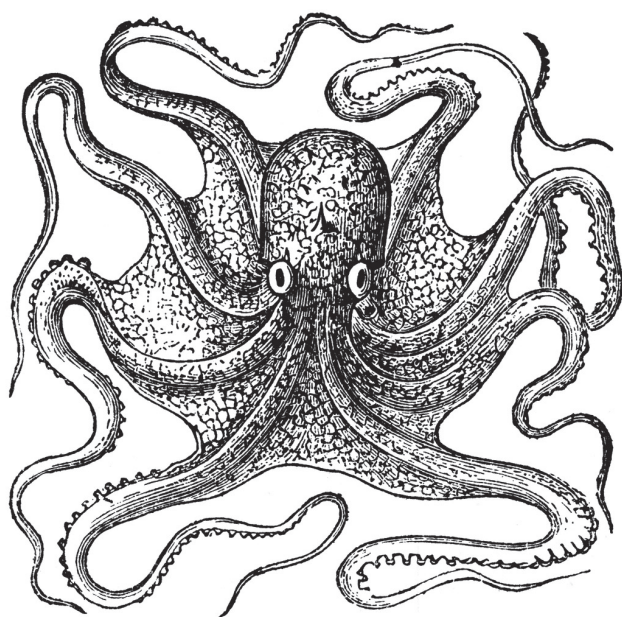
I am in a single cell and pretty much always have been. The prison itself can be more lonely than the cell, particularly this one. I am eager to start my meditation classes, which are tomorrow! I'm still going strong with yoga every week and multiple gym sessions, which work great together. Even though I am sentenced to a minimum of 24 years, I am able to smile for the first time in my prison life. This is my first time in prison and even though I don't know what happens next, I am ready for anything, head on, with a smile!

From HMP The Mount



Every day now I am practising meditation. Focussing on breath, experiencing thoughts and feelings, accepting and letting go. Experience, accept, let go. Experience, accept, let go – and on and on! I feel no pain in my body now – THANK YOU!! Just sometimes a plasticity feeling in the back of my neck and shoulders, but this is diminishing as time goes on. I've heard the mind described as monkey mind or a wild horse. My mind seems like a crazy octopus with its legs flailing about wildly, desperately trying to cling on to things! When I sit, the octopus's legs calm down and I experience a sense of release. Once my sitting session is over the octopus wakes up and the craziness starts over again.

I had a dream about my Mum being hurt that really frightened me. I woke in the middle of the night covered in ice cold sweat. My bed was wet from my sweat. I felt intense fear! I had to get up and turn the light on. They say babies have an inbuilt fear of the parents dying because babies know they are helpless on their own without their parents and then they'll die. I lost my Dad and older



"My mind is like a crazy octopus..."

Letters

brother around the age of 3 ½. Maybe my subconscious is telling me through my dreams that I grew up terrified of losing my Mum. Maybe this fear is still very much with me. Maybe this is why I grew up worried and stressed out. Maybe this is why I grew up feeling lost in this world.

I like the pranayama techniques in Bo's book *We're All Doing Time*. I do a full yoga breath, breathing in golden goodness... holding so it absorbs blocks... then letting all that oldness out. It makes me feel power, young, and my skin gets a pleasant tingle. It's really working for me. After all the problems I've had coming off drugs in prison, I actually feel quite free.



From HMP Frankland

Two months now and I am still not smoking. During the day it is not too bad. It is first thing in the morning, just as I wake, when the craving hits me most.

It is true that one's taste becomes stronger. I now buy herbal teas, little sweet treats. Their taste is greatly enhanced and my sense of smell is not clouded by smoke fumes. One big worry I now have is that the prison food smells and tastes better (yuck, yuck, yuck).

A couple of nights ago I put the *Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body* CD on. I did not do any exercises except control my breathing. I sat gluing match sticks together, breathing slowly and listening to the CD. It really chilled me out.

I was getting a week's pay from the noisy dirty workshops, then I was getting an extra few pound for my buddy work. Now I have stopped smoking I have come out of the workshops and now I am a full time buddy. I get a lot less money, but I get it by caring for others. And with no fags to buy I can still live in a degree of comfort. I do miss working with big and noisy machinery and I also miss making furniture. But my buddy job is less tiring and a lot cleaner with no noise.



From HMP Pentonville

Each day I make time for yoga and meditation, usually before I go to bed. Your CD is very good at clearing the mind before sleep.

The meditation is re-connecting me with God. I feel the timing of my arrest was designed, as for most of my teenage and adult life I have struggled with drug and alcohol, and for the first time in my



Envelope from a prisoner, Rowanbank Clinic

life I am clean and sober.

In the lead up to my arrest I was searching but felt God wasn't for me. I now believe He is and feel He gave me prison in order to be able to find him. Several sermons in chapel have seemed to be aimed at me. I know they couldn't have been: it was God talking through others.

I struggle still with thoughts and desires but find his help very good. As I said before I believe his higher plan for me had to start this way and actually thank him for it. I never thought I would be happy without weed or drink, and be able to trust God.

Getting your address and the kind handwritten response meant a great deal to me. I put all the thanks with God and all who have prayed for me over the years.



Meditation Corner

Amazing Treasure

**By Sandy
Yoga Teacher and
former PPT Director**

There is an invisible treasure which leaps out offering up just what you need on some days. Amazing! In fact, we are always being given good things but when our worries and self-absorption fill the universe, they cannot be seen. If you have never experienced this unexpected, spontaneous glimpse of something which fits you exactly try this...

Sit cross legged with a straight back on a chair or with your rear end on books so you are raised about 4 inches from the floor. Put your pillow on the top to cushion it. Now relax completely. Let everything go (except your straight back). Breathe in and out through your nose and listen.

Listen to the living silence. Keep listening to the silence in the heart of the slamming doors and jangling keys. Nothing can interrupt this deep silence vibrating within you, like an ocean of peace murmuring without noise flowing

in and around you.

In the silence everything is alive. Nothing is ever lost. Here are your ancestors from long ago full of compassion. They are sitting and standing and listening with you, never apart.

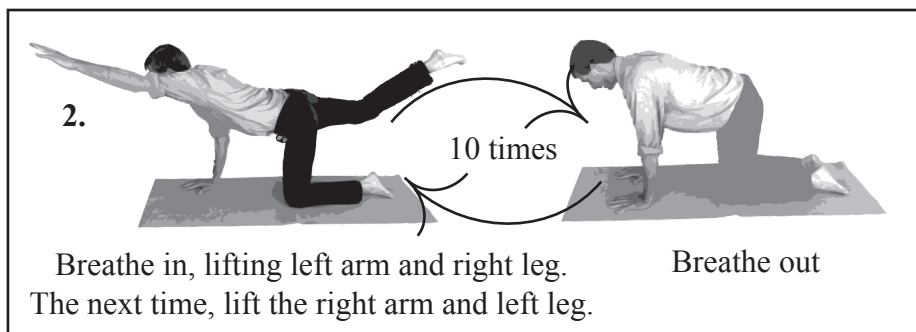
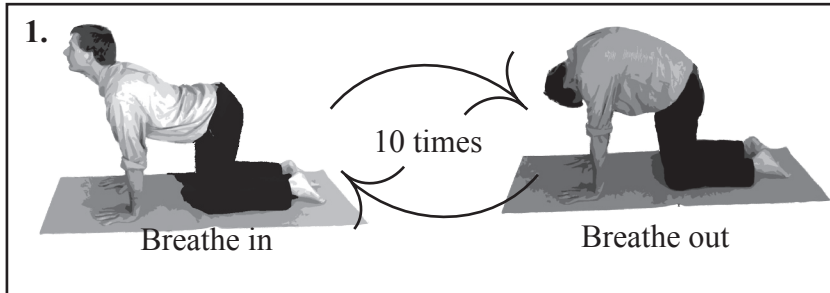
When you practise like this, without effort, you are letting go. You are allowing worry and self absorption to slip away until you gradually notice there is nothing to hang on to – and, hey! - that's all right! It's such a simple, natural act to breathe and to listen and to let yourself go. Over time, you might find yourself trusting to something other than yourself, some indefinable power of such immensity it is even beyond time and space. Then anxiety and fear about the day ahead are released.

And that's when things start to fit together just like a jigsaw. For once, you don't have to do a thing. Just breathe and listen ...and let go. And without being aware that you are living in love, living freely, moment by moment, you might find the day starts to work just fine. This vast power is in you all the time so why not use it?

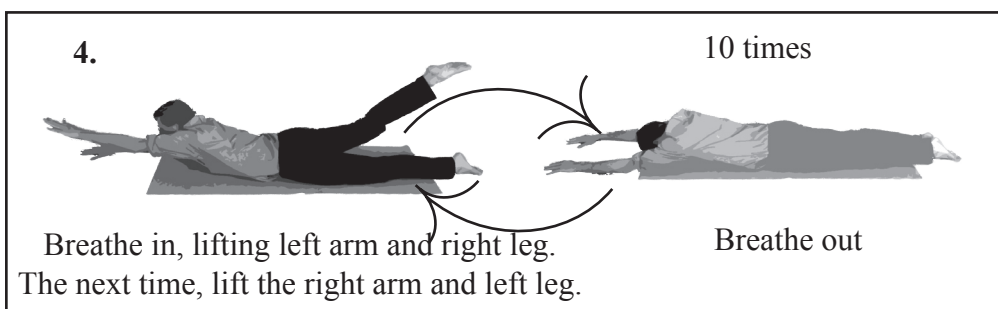


Back on Track

Most of us have back trouble at some point in our lives. Yoga is fantastic for restoring your back to good health and keeping it happy. You've got 33 vertebrae or segments of bones (from the cervical through to the coccyx) in your spine. The poses below keep the joints between those 33 segments flexible and healthy. They also strengthen your back, so it's less likely to be injured. Move slowly and with your breath. Enjoy the feeling of movement. You are doing something good for your back!



Keep your hands an inch off the floor and your feet on the ground. Hold as long as you can while breathing normally.



 By Sam



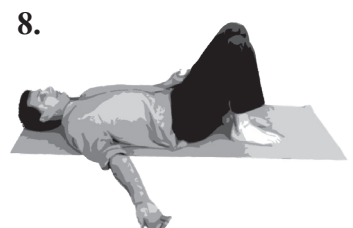
Stay like this for 10 slow breaths.



Hold knee over chest for 10 slow breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Place your left foot over your straight right leg. Twist to the left. Hold for 10 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Lie like this for 5 minutes. If your back feels okay, you can also lie with your legs straight out.

Changing Yoga Coordinators: Goodbye Elaine & Hello Brent!



Thanks to all of you I met and wrote to over the past two and half years. It was wonderful to see so many people improving their state of mind and wellbeing. I really enjoyed working with you and wish you the very best.



I am proud to join the PPT and our community of teachers, students and people practising in their cells. Yoga and meditation are truly wonderful practices. I look forward to doing yoga with you at our prison workshops.

Back From Rock Bottom

From a prisoner,
HMP Liverpool



Reading the prisoners' letters, I see I'm not the only person with issues like my quick temper, moodswings, violent tendencies and depression.

I received an IPP sentence this year with a six year tariff, for attempted murder and robbery, mostly due to my long term drug abuse. I'm 46 and have taken drugs, mainly amphetamines, since I was 15. Then, when my wife of 19 years had an affair six years ago, I started taking heroin to block out my emotions.

These past six years have been a living hell. On separation she gave me custody of two of my sons. I had a heroin habit and knew it would be hard to cope with not only my problems and emotions but my sons as well. "Dad, why does Mum not have us any more?" and them waking up at night crying. Them two boys saw

a lot more than children their age should ever see. I started selling heroin and crack not only to fund my own habit but to try and give them what they wanted, which I know was wrong, but at the time I felt so guilty.

Anyway, I was arrested for supplying undercover police. I lost my house and the boys had to go into foster care. I received 2 ½ years.

When I was released, I was homeless, dossing at people's houses and back on the smack. I'd hit rock bottom and ended up robbing someone. I lost the plot and nearly killed him. In fact he died the day I got sentenced.

Lovely and quiet

I came to prison this time a very angry man. In the ten months I've been here I've had as many adjudications. I'm now on basic for being abusive to staff and inmates. With no tv or anything, it's given me time to read your book, *Freeing the Spirit through Meditation and Yoga*. I can't believe how quick it's all come back, the breathing and awareness.

It's lovely and quiet down here and believe it or not the wing has a really calming and relaxed feeling. I meditate

every day now, sometimes five or six times a day, for an hour at a time. It's been an emotional journey, especially with past experiences creeping in the mind and how I reacted but then I look at how I would react now and can see things a lot more clearly. My mind was black and head was so messed up, but now meditation brings peace and a close understanding of who I am. It's unreal.

Meditation is a good substitute to drugs. It's helped me no end with my heroin addiction. I was terrified to come off the methadone but eight weeks clean and I'm a human being again, but only through the comfort of my meditation. When the screws say, "What's up with you, lad? You've been quiet lately. You've not kicked off over anything." I say that I'm meditating all the time, and they say, "Nice one," but I can see they're laughing at me. I feel sorry for their ignorance.

I've been talking to some of the lads who once were terrified of me cos of my anger problems and I've told them I'm thinking of trying to start a yoga class. Everyone I've spoken to has said yes and we're looking for somewhere to do it.



Life on Release



Thanking the Universe

Nicola reflects on freedom, disability and staying useful

Your newsletter is passed around my tiny village after I have read it. Even though I left prison 17 years ago, I still cherish the support you gave me. The newsletter remains a link to that odd time; not a bad link, but a wonderful reminder of how bad things can get and how very lucky I am now.

There are very few mornings that I wake up and do not thank the universe for my freedom. What a gift freedom is, and how undervalued – after all, how can you appreciate something properly that you've never lost?

Since I last wrote I have been struggling with encroaching disability. I have degenerative disc disease and am losing mobility at an alarming rate. My beautiful mountain home seems to be shrinking as I can get to less and less of it, but I still wobble down to the little river almost every day with my lazy Daisy dog.

Every day the river has something else to show me. Today, it is sparkling

with frost after a night time temperature of - 8°C and the red kites and buzzards swirl around the tops of the frosted trees mewing like cats, chasing each other around in a clear blue sky.

Surprises every day

Last week, I found a large sea trout on the bank. It had been half eaten by local otters and was nearly 2 feet long. I have lived here for nine years and this is the first fish of this size I have seen. I was amazed! A couple of weeks before that I found an old hobnailed boot – at least 80 years old - and a perfect clay pipe bowl that is over 100. My world may be much smaller than I would like, but it is still a beautiful, rich place that surprises me every day.

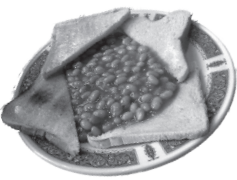
In June the real world intruded as I had to be reassessed for my benefit and go



to one of the dreaded medicals. I spent days rounding up all the documents, all the disability aids and medicines and a friend kindly drove me to the hospital. Even though I consider myself to be fairly laid back I was pretty stressed. Some six months later I finally got the confirmation that they agree I'm sick and will pay me benefit for the next three years. What a gift!

I'm not saying I don't have black days. Chronic and intense pain that never gives up does sometimes make me miserable – and old. Luckily it doesn't last too long and I don't suffer depression. I find something to take my mind off it.

I have written my first novel – that sounds grand, but I have. And after a lifetime of saying "I hate sewing" I have started making things out of recycled material from the local charity shop. I then sell the things to raise money to save our Gregorian Church, the only one in Powys. If I can still be useful, there is still a point to Nicola!



Prison Food: Making the Most of It

By Ross



In 2008 I was 18 stone in HMP Guys Marsh - four stone overweight. Before I got released I decided I needed to shift the excess baggage and get in shape

to have a better quality of life 'on the out'. I had thought about the gym but had never been. Sometimes there is such a shortage of spaces for the gyms (and some very determined regulars always at the front of the queue) that many people either go without or, like myself, find something they can try in the privacy of their cell after bang up.

I picked yoga after trying it at a stress management course. I knew some of the postures were physically demanding and offered both strength and fitness gains as well as a sense of well being and confident calm control. It seemed a lot easier than running on a treadmill (which I find boring), or lifting weights. When you feel tired or flat from obesity they can be draining.

No More Mars Bars

The canteen sheets to spend wages on are full of sweets and chocolate, cakes and biscuits, which offer comfort in adverse conditions. If I was going to get fit and lose the weight I needed to modify my diet as well as find the right exercise for me. I stopped buying Mars bars and Nutella and syrup cakes, sugar and crisps and started buying healthy cereals like Weetabix or Porridge with honey to top it off and some extra milk to get through the week on that stuff. Other really good sources of fibre are fruit and veg like apples, oranges, grapes and cucumbers. Tins of beans are great too, but wash off the sauce in the sink - it's basically just sugar and salt.

I remember the night I sat down and made these decisions I felt better and uplifted already. I had an action plan and action is definitely the antidote to despair.

Each week we get the menu sheet to make our meal selections. The question was, though, what was the best choice? There is meat option, veggie option or the alleged healthy option. The reality is, there is very little health benefit in any of these. They are usually packet foods produced for 'best value' (i.e. as cheaply as possible) and the only health benefit is survival. The meat options are the cheapest cuts and mainly gristle and fat. The fish option is usually four fish fingers, sometimes three, or a small battered and fried fish portion from a packet. Not nice or healthy!

The veggie option would be something like a sweetcorn fritter - sweetcorn added to a batter mix and fried. The healthy option would be a plain jacket potato with beans. All three options served with beans and potatoes most days. So a healthy option would be jacket potato and beans served with... boiled potato and beans.

Sugary Glue

The reality is, most people are hungry all the time in prison. Food is the most precious item on any prisoner's agenda. Because stimulation of any kind is a source of cravings, people in prison will just order whatever will taste best, as health-wise there is nothing to choose between any of it.

Bread is abundant, but cutting down on the bread consumption would be very useful. It is everywhere, on the servery and on tables by toasters on all wings. But eating loads of bread to fill up isn't good for you! The prison jam is flavoured sugary glue and the margarine is hydrogenated grease that doesn't melt on hot toast placed in a microwave. It's probably very good for high velocity joints on vehicles.

So, with prison food, cut out the fat and starchy carbs as much as possible and buy as much healthy fibre as you can on the canteen sheet. Get as much exercise as you can in your cell with yoga and body weight exercise like push ups and sit ups.

When the yoga has given you some courage and confidence, get down the gym and on the circuit training or CV equipment like cross trainer or rowing machine. Tada! Bob's your uncle.

Coccyx

Being a mammal
I am marvelling at how
the dolphin's tail swoops
over her back, propels
her through water
and releases her into the air.

My own bobtail twitches
at the memory.
Though it is many years
since I were a fish

I can still wag my stump
like a docked dog
re-united with its owner
or its favourite ball -

rousing the euphoric waves
to swirl up my spine
and burst out
of my crown -

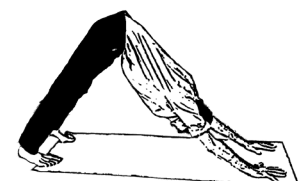
reminding me also
that a wave, or curve or bow
is what sends the arrow home.

~ Tina Sederholm

Coccyx - the lowest segment of the spinal column. As humans evolved from primates they lost their tails. The coccyx, or tailbone, is what remains.



Dolphin



Downward Dog



Bow

Bo Lozoff Dies In Motorcycle Crash

If you've read We're All Doing Time, you may feel you've met Bo Lozoff. His books challenged and gave direction not only to prisoners in the U.K. and Ireland, but also in the U.S., where he and his wife Sita set up the Human Kindness Foundation (HKF) 40 years ago. He understood the emotional and spiritual struggles of inmates, and his wisdom was compassionate and clear, striking straight at the problems of those who wrote to him, like banging home a nail with three solid whacks. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners have been helped by his wisdom. Many carry his book with them through their sentence and beyond, telling friends about it, inspired to help others the way Bo helped them.

Bo died riding his motorcycle last November when the driver of a car failed to yield the right of way and pulled in front of him. Sita requests that your prayers include the driver of the other vehicle. The HKF remains committed to making Bo's teaching freely available to prisoners.

Here, we include an excerpt of a response Bo wrote to a prisoner asking him about enlightenment, to give you a taste of his teaching.

Enlightenment is an egoless state.
Here's an example of what that means: right now, you are reading this letter, which means your eyes are performing amazing actions to recognise these words and send signals to your brain which then performs even more amazing actions to interpret the words and "think" about them. But there is no one saying "Oh, eyes, you're doing such a good job, now focus the retina, go to the next word on the page, that's it, that's it..."

The eyes, ears, brain, heart, stomach, lungs, etc., are entirely egoless. No pride, no shame, no ambitions, no thoughts of the past nor hopes for the future, no "self" at all. Yet they function brilliantly without being the slightest bit aware of themselves.

Now picture your personality being just like that – functioning naturally, spontaneously, with zero ego-awareness of being a personality. Do our eyes know they are eyes? Does our brain know it's a brain? Well, a saint does not know he is a saint. He is just there, doing perfect and



Bo strumming a tune

brilliant things like our eyes and ears, without noticing himself at all. Because there is no longer any sense of separation between being and doing, it is all One.

For me to know that I am Bo is to feel I am separate from you. So I want to be the best Bo I can be, but I must humbly understand I have a ways to go before the sense of "being Bo" is gone. Our spiritual pop-culture often encourages people to think they are farther along than they are, and this is a disservice to spiritual seekers. It is healthier to realise we have no idea where we are on the path, except that it feels better than when we used to be addicted, selfish, confused etc. But we have no idea how much further there is to go. That's the best attitude for a life of spiritual practice and service to others.

How Can I See God?

There are plenty of mystical experiences, awesome powers and miracles on this journey to Enlightenment. But when a devotee asked my Guru, "How can I see God?" my Guru replied "Feed people." Then the devotee said, "But how can I raise the Kundalini?" My Guru replied "Serve people." My Guru certainly encouraged people to do daily practices like meditation, but He wanted to make sure we also realised the way we treat the most "insignificant" person, the way we brush our teeth, the way we treat the earth and its resources, everything we do

and even the things we think about are as much a part of the practice as the formal techniques like meditation or yoga.

Embracing this is an important step of the journey. It helps you settle in for the long haul, instead of doing some intense practices for a few years and then being frustrated that you aren't yet enlightened.

When we are actually enlightened, there is just spontaneous goodness with no self-awareness of its own goodness. The enlightened state does not wonder "about" where we are or how much we understand. It IS the state of wonder.

I know I have used a lot of words here, but they have mainly been about just two ideas: first, the enlightened state is not just feeling calm and peaceful, and second, that we don't know how far along the path we are. If you just take in those two points, all your other questions will eventually fade. A disciple once asked Ramana Maharshi, "Will meditation answer all my questions?" The saint answered, "No, but it will destroy the questioner." That's my point.

All love and blessings for your great journey, Bo

If you're in a prison, secure hospital, approved premises or IRC, or have been, and you'd like a copy of We're All Doing Time, drop us a line. If you've already read it, you might enjoy Bo's Just Another Spiritual Book or his short stories Lineage. We can send you these too.



Breathing Space

 By Elaine

In addition to postures and movements, relaxation and meditation, there's another part of yoga practice that you really don't want to miss. It's called pranayama. Prana means 'vital energy' and ayama means 'expansion.' Sometimes it's called breathing practice, but it's actually about using your breath to influence the flow of energy in the body. There are many different pranayama practices and the effects on the body and mind can be profound, shifting your mood and energy noticeably.

The pranayama described below really helps with asthma and chronic obstructive lung conditions. It's called Ujjayi breath (rhymes with moo-pie-ee) which means victorious. It is often called ocean breath because it sounds like a soft ocean. It's excellent because the sound helps you to stay focussed. Here's how you do it:

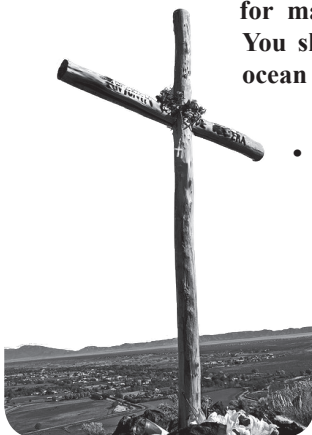
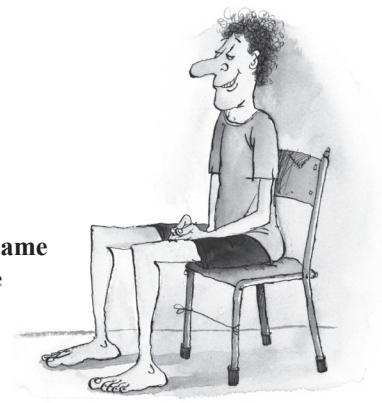
- Sit on the edge of a chair or your bed, feet flat on the floor or sit cross-legged. Close your eyes. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.
- When you breathe out, make the sound 'HHHHAAAA.'
- Repeat these first 2 steps 3 times.
- On the 4th out breath, close your mouth half way through the out breath and continue breathing out through the nose, your throat stays in the position for making the HHHHAAAA sound. You should hear a soft sound like an ocean wave, coming from the throat, not the nose.

- When you breathe in next,

keep the throat in the same position, so that the same sound is produced. Do this loud enough for you to hear, but not someone who is sitting across the room.

- Continue to breathe in and out through the nose, making this soft sound from the throat.
- Begin to balance your in breath with your out breath, making the sound, quality and length the same for both the in and out breaths. You may notice your out breath is longer and stronger, so you can expand and emphasise the in breath. This is the first way to expand your breath.
- One way of making the in breath and out breath the same length is to count your heartbeats. If you happen to be able to feel your heartbeats, you can count five heartbeats while you breathe in, and five when you breathe out. If you can't feel your heartbeat, don't worry. Just count to five in your mind.
- Continue sitting upright for five minutes, practising this breath.

After five minutes, sit still and simply experience the effect this breath has had. Has your breathing become easier? Is your heart more open?



“How else but through a broken heart may
Lord Christ enter in?”

~ from the Ballad of Reading Gaol, Oscar Wilde

This newsletter goes to members of the prison community and to our many friends on the outside who continue to offer us their encouragement. The Prison Phoenix Trust is a small charity depending totally on supporters' kindness and financial generosity to continue in our work to help our friends inside. We are especially grateful to those who set up standing orders, which help us to plan our yearly activities more easily.

Prison Phoenix Trust Newsletter
PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF
registered charity no. 327907

