



Newsletter, Winter 2014



GATE FEVER



The traditional way for treating fevers is to eat less, as in the old saying, “Starve a fever, feed a cold.” But if you’ve got Gate Fever, you’ve got to think beyond what’s on your dinner plate. You may be worried about what lies in store, wondering if you will cope, and feel restless and even fearful. At the same time you might have grand plans for the future, and be tremendously excited. All these feelings are often mixed up together, and it can really do your nut.

No one can pin down the future and make it go exactly how we want it to. But each of us is sitting on an immense treasure that can help steady you during the last part of your sentence: your own inherent wisdom.

As you plan for life after jail, take advantage of anything on offer in terms of support with work, housing, bank accounts, prescriptions, etc. But don’t forget the most valuable support there is: this wisdom always here within you.

Our wisdom is often like a person sitting quietly in a room full of noisy people clamouring for attention: they go unnoticed and unheard. But when allowed to speak, they can surprise you with their clarity and simplicity. One way to encourage this wisdom in ourselves, is by exercising in a way that releases tension from our bodies – the postures of yoga are excellent for that. Then, with your body feeling good, loose and relaxed, sit down and sit still for 10 minutes. Keep still (easier to do after a yoga session) and become your breath. Put your attention completely into the feeling in the body as you breathe in and breathe out.

As you do this, you might feel the anxiety or excitement or

uncertainty of your Gate Fever. Don’t worry, you’re not doing it wrong. But if you’re interested in treating your Gate Fever, put your attention on your breath, and keep bringing it back to the breath when it wanders off. Don’t try to get rid of your thoughts

or feelings. Instead, just focus with real curiosity on the breath. Eventually, the feelings may start to calm down a little bit, and you may find their hold on you is less strong. And when your heart or mind is slightly emptier of worry, fear and anxiety, your wisdom can start to find its voice, and help you make the most of your time left in prison, and during the difficult time after release too.

Many people in prison take up this habit of sitting, focussing on their breath for between 10 minutes and an hour, or longer, each day. After

a while, it becomes clear that while it looks like you are doing nothing, it is unquestionably helpful.

Whether you are out of prison, still have some time to go, or are getting ready to walk out, all of us send you love and good wishes this winter! **Happy Ashura, Hanukkah, Yule, Christmas, Bodhi Day, New Year and Vasant Panchami to you!**



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

**“The pine stays green in winter...
Wisdom in hardship.”**

~ Norman Douglas (writer, 1868 - 1952)

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.



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From HMP Winchester

It made sense to me to practise yoga and sitting regularly to start getting any results. It's just like anything else, I suppose, a skill that you can learn.

Now I'm in a cell on my own I can form a routine without being disturbed by anyone. I sit quietly at 6 a.m. for a while and then do a few yoga movements. This seems to loosen me up but I tighten up again through the day, so I think the more I do the better I will feel. I feel more centred in myself. I feel happy.

I've spent years creating an outer shell that people make their first impressions on, of someone they wouldn't want to upset or cross, to keep myself safe. I was always afraid as a kid and this continued growing up, so I learned to fight and look quite unapproachable. I would love to be just me, without ego and pride and feeling more or less than others. Beginning to sit and breathe is a great start towards me being me.

I seem to feel calmer at the moment. I had a situation recently where I reacted completely differently to how I normally would and I felt good about it.

I spoke to my mother today and she said that I sounded really good. Now she knows my state of mind just by the sound or tone of my voice. She's right, I am very happy right now. It doesn't matter where I am as I was miserable out there before I was arrested. I didn't want to go out in the sunshine, wishing it would rain, and felt horrible about my body because I'd relapsed and hadn't been to the gym for a month. It's all stuff that goes on in my head, the lies it tells me and I listen to it – it wants me dead and is very cunning. I'm an addict and know that the problem is all about my mind so the meditation is great for me to practise with that.

I'm trying to sit and breathe throughout the day when things come up. I even went so far as asking an officer to lock me in my cell after spending an hour trying to get out of it to attend the gym, which I had missed by the time my door opened. It was very frustrating so I felt it was best I was in my own space. He looked confused! But I've started to realise what's best for me. I still have a way to go, but no rush: I'm going in the right direction.

From HMP Winchester

Since coming into prison four months ago I have found yoga very helpful. On my arrival here, and previously too, I was in a very dark and destructive frame of mind.

On the outside I was faced with regular periods of homelessness and unable to work for long periods due to illness. I was always lonely, to the point I saw little reason in carrying on. The routine in prison has got me back on track, but I could not cut through the boredom and isolation in here until I attended a yoga session run by yourselves. Combined with a simple exercise routine, reading and mentoring others in reading on top of yoga, I have found a way to cope.



From HMP Wormwood Scrubs

Now that I've got your book *Freeing the Spirit* and your CD and I've shown all the inmates, everybody now wants to do it and get their own copies.

I'm so happy that you have changed my mind and way of thinking. Plus I feel great. That's true.

It has helped me with my drug problem



Prisoners'

and kept me safe and healthy as well as my group. Everyone's so happy for me and the change it's made to my life and ways of thinking.

From HMP Highpoint

I've done all the courses I can do to help me deal with my mother's death outside and inside and I feel very stressed out. I've just gone through *Inside Time* and tried the yoga thing that's going on. At first I just looked at it and smiled, then when I tried it I felt so at ease so it's something I would like to do every time I feel low. I would like a CD and a book to help me, please.



From HMP Bronzefield

Meditation has really changed my life. It's incredible. I don't dwell on the past any more, not like I used to. I have found inner peace in myself. My life was chaotic before, I hated everyone. I am an alcoholic but I'm recovering, and my meditation has helped me fight that addiction. I am at peace with myself and life.

My confidence has grown and grown. I've also learnt to love myself and the person that I am and I actually feel in tune with myself. I understand who I am a whole lot more. I help others. I am a recovery worker and I take meditation classes on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The girls find it very helpful, especially if they are stressed out, angry, anxious or depressed. It calms them down and they enjoy it.

Meditation brings a lot of people hope, peace and understanding, and it also brings you back to life. I am also a Buddhist, which helps me stay calm. I have been here a year, and in that year I have had no negative comments, no run ins with the officers. I don't get angry, annoyed or anxious and I don't lose my temper.

I've come back to the person I used to be before I took drugs or alcohol. It doesn't happen overnight; it comes with time. When I came back to jail I had a lack of confidence but now my confidence has grown. I know what I want out of life and I am focussed when I go to work. I use



From a friend, Berkshire

Letters



meditation when I have had a stressful day.

Most of your life is spent on thinking and only a fraction of this is usually needed. Much of this thinking is based on what we are told or conditioned to think, but dwelling on past failure or worrying about the future is something we can happily live without, and this is where meditation is useful. It allows the mind to start thinking afresh, without being influenced by our opinions and worries. It is like starting the day with a clean fresh sheet of paper.

From HMP The Mount

Iborrowed a copy of your book *We're All Doing Time* off a fellow prisoner. He said it was a really good book and I should read it. At first I was just borrowing it because I was placed on basic (no TV) and thought it would be a good way to pass some time. But after reading a few chapters I couldn't put it down, and now after reading almost all of it, it has really changed my perspective on how I've been living my life.

Before reading this book I was a person lost in this world. What I mean by this is, I was always



looking for something, always on the go, unable to sit with people without feeling that I shouldn't be there. I was unsure about my religious beliefs and turned my back to God. I was unable to feel love from my fellow human beings and rejected love from my family and friends. But now I think those things are beginning to disappear and I'm beginning to be free. I'm beginning to feel love and grow spiritually within myself.

I have been practising meditation for the past week, which has helped me when I pray. When I prayed before this I didn't feel like I was getting through to God but now my spirit is growing and each day I'm feeling happier than the last, I feel God is hearing my prayer. I've been in prison 20 months just being depressed most of the time. I have 13 months left now and I think it will be a lot easier now.

I think once I'm released back into the community I will be able to deal with the hiccups in life without resorting to crime and drugs. I'll be able to let people love me because I will be able to love them back.



Sent Via Facebook

Hello everyone at the PPT, Especially Anita. Wish you all well. Been outta jail for almost four months; flown by, can't believe it. Things are tough sometimes but keep on keeping

on, don't have any other choice. Never wanna go back to that. Spiritual practice gives me a way of dealing with my nemesis, me...

From Cork Prison

At appeal, things didn't go my way, and I got two years added to my sentence. I was gutted, it was a really bad shock. I thought to myself after everything that has happened to me, "How could this now be happening to me, what does it all mean?" But like all other setbacks I have had since coming to prison I kept on meditating and doing more yoga and slowly but surely I began to accept that that's the way life goes and we have to get on with it. I am still 100% drug free, thank God.

I have been very busy with school and I now have 15 certs, I am an Irish Red Cross inmate and I am also a listener. It goes to show that meditation and yoga can help you through anything.



PPT letter writers are always happy to write to you about your yoga and meditation practice. Drop us a line!

Meditation Corner



Since waking up this morning, how many times have you wished for something different? Perhaps you would like a cell

on your own, a telly (or no telly), your family to visit, or most probably not to be in prison at all. With Christmas approaching, wishes of being elsewhere can become acutely painful – and often just another prayer unanswered.

But there is a way to transform a prayer into something alive which cannot fail. It works like magic... and you can do this right now. Try to find somewhere you can sit upright and still for around ten minutes. You will need to concentrate,



By Jason

and be able to tolerate the sounds and other disturbances going on around you. With your hands resting in your lap, turn your attention to your breathing, and just focus on the movement of air entering and leaving the nostrils. Try to keep focussed like this for several minutes, and return to your breathing if the mind wanders or becomes distracted. Now is not the time to resolve problems, request things, or wish for any changes at all. This is the key to this special type of prayer – not attempting to change or work anything out. This can be pretty tricky for our clever minds, but with practice it is possible. Just keep forgetting thoughts, returning to the breath and know that you don't have to find the answers to any problems that arise.

The Gift of Gratitude

Gradually you will start to feel grateful for not having to solve problems. This is such a relief – and a wonderful gift to discover. We may find the only prayer we can offer is one of gratitude for being able to survive the situation we find ourselves in. If we do not know the answers, then you will see this unlimited resource continually sustain and nourish us. There can be no greater gift this Christmas – or any time of the year.





Follow Your Nose!



By Sally

"When the breath wanders, the mind is unsteady, but when the breath is still, so is the mind still."

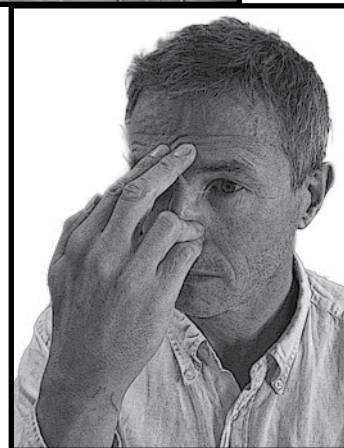
From the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, 15th century

The connection between the breath and the mind has been known for centuries and it is something you can see for yourself. When you are angry or scared your breathing becomes shallow, rapid and irregular. When you are relaxed it is slower. The ancients claimed that yoga breathing revitalizes the body, steadies the emotions and creates great clarity of mind. Many people have forgotten how to breath properly and as a result feel sluggish and emotionally out of balance. But we can use our breathing to calm our emotions and settle our thoughts, helping us to think clearly and make better decisions. It's amazing how something so easy can make such a difference. One exercise to help tune into your breath and regulate how you feel is alternate nostril breathing. Here's how you do it:

1 Sit upright on a chair or the edge of your bed. Have your back straight, your feet flat on the floor and your chin slightly tucked.

- 2** Breathe in through the left nostril, closing the right with your thumb.
- 3** Hold the breath very briefly, just for one second, closing both nostrils.
- 4** Breathe out through the right nostril, keeping the left nostril closed with your ring and little fingers.
- 5** Breathe in through the right nostril, keeping the left nostril closed.
- 6** Hold the breath briefly, closing both nostrils.
- 7** Breathe out through the left nostril, keeping the right nostril closed with your thumb.

This is one round. Do 15 rounds. Although you are controlling your breath, it should be comfortable. Afterwards, sit for half a minute, breathing normally and noticing how you feel. Drop us a line for more information on yoga breathing, or to let us know how you got on with this practice.



Christmas Card Order Form

- Please send me 1 pack of 10 cards at £5.
- Please send me ___ additional packs of 10 cards at £4 per pack.
- I enclose a cheque payable to The Prison Phoenix Trust for £ _____.

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

☐

I've ticked this box because I've requested my prison send you payment.

Still Time to Buy Cards

Reg Zenshen has designed this year's Christmas card (152 x 103mm). The inside message is from the author Hamilton Wright Mabie - "Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love." You can see it in colour on our website. To order, send the form to the left 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.



Wherever I Lay My Mat

From HMP Lindeholme

Four years ago I began my yoga journey at HMP Armley. I entered a Safer Custody programme where yoga was taught to everyone willing to participate. Yoga quickly became a coping mechanism, helping me to find a quieter place and helping me to deal rationally with most everyday situations that arise in prison. Yoga immediately began to have a positive effect on my wellbeing, both mentally and physically, helping me through those dark times we all suffer behind our cell doors. Also, after a few short months, the back problems I had suffered for years began to ease and I found I was seldom using painkillers. Yoga had begun to teach me about body awareness and with a short yoga session of certain asana (movements) the pain would ease and eventually go. I now only use a pain killer in extreme circumstances.

After 12 months had passed, I found yoga had become part of my every day/night existence. My day never felt complete unless I had practised yoga, even if it was a short 15-20 minute session. Yoga was playing such a positive part in

my life, the benefits were starting to show and my positive manner was starting to transfer to other people. Inmates who knew I was looking at a lengthy sentence commented and asked why, for the most part, I was calm and together. So I told them of yoga and its benefits, sharing my experiences so far. It wasn't long before a few inmates and myself began to practise yoga together. This helped me, and my studying and practising of yoga moved to another level.

My yoga tutor then suggested I took the BSY 1st Teachers' Yoga Course and the backing of my Governor made this possible. Over the next twelve months I passed the course.

Over the next two and a half years, I was privileged and honoured to teach and share many wonderful yoga lessons with my fellow inmates and staff at HMP Rye Hill. In this time I witnessed yoga improve so many people's wellbeing. I watched inmates reduce their medication, improve their fitness and gain confidence in themselves, enabling them to go back to the gym, start to mix in social times and cut down and sometimes stop



smoking. Yoga gave many a new, positive outlook.

Due to the re-roll at HMP Ryehill, regrettably I had to roll up my yoga mat and move to ventures new. So here I am at HMP Lindeholme. It is early days, but I am pleased to say there seems to be quite a lot of interest in yoga. Having bumped into a few yoga buddies from Ryehill and having met a few good lads who like yoga, we practise whenever the opportunity arrives – usually two or three times a week.

I know yoga and its benefits will remain with me, throughout the rest of my days. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have backed and supported me, making it possible for me to teach. Also a big hello to all those who have practised and shared the benefits of yoga – remember we are all one and our practising of yoga will always unite us.

I would just add and say to anyone thinking of doing yoga, “stop thinking so much” – just try it and let yoga do your thinking for you.

Relax the mind, unwind the body, and find the time to appreciate the real you.

The story in the autumn issue of the PPT newsletter about the salt doll and the ocean made me smile. When I was studying for my 1st Yoga Teachers' Diploma it spoke about the ocean and a droplet of water. How if you put that drop of water into the ocean it would become part of the whole ocean and the universe. It took me a few readings to grasp what it meant then it came home to me that we are all one and I have never felt alone since. When I practise I think of all the people throughout the world who are practising with me.



Clearing the Heart at Bedtime

There's no question yoga and meditation help you sleep better.

Many people in prison tell us they also pray before bed. Another way to wrap up the day is to review it, with some questions. This can help you take what you've learned from the day into your sleep. Explore the thought exercises here and you may find your heart is clearer and your sleep is more peaceful.



By Sam

1 Think of three good things that went well today, along with why you think they went well.

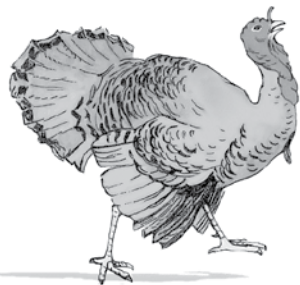
2 Remember at least one time during the day when you had a positive interaction with someone, even if it was

only for a brief time. Maybe

sharing a smile with someone, engaging in conversation, or experiencing kindness.

3 Do you wish you had treated anyone or anything differently during your day? This question is about recognising you are human, and that you may wish to ask forgiveness. Sleep tight!





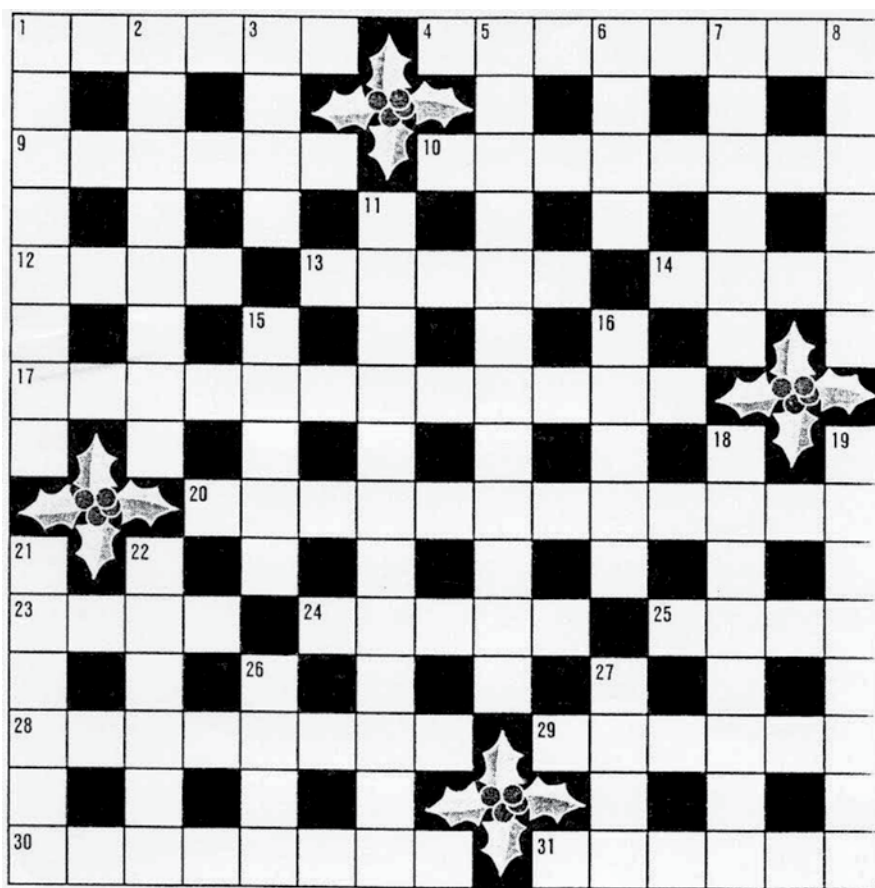
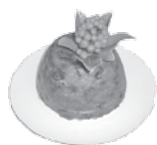
Cryptic Christmas!

Roger Squires, Guinness Book of Records champion compiler, publishes in many national newspapers, such as the Telegraph, the Guardian and the Financial Times. He has created over 70,000 crosswords. Here is a winter puzzle he has donated for you to crack. Two brains are better than one, so try this puzzle with a friend!

Solutions are at the bottom of page 7.

Across

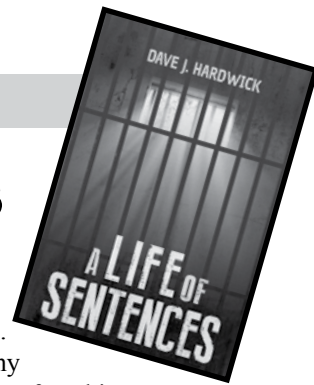
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Christmas package is in the right place for sorting (6) | 20. Members of the services at Christmas (12) |
| 4. Present comes from French leader in foreign parts (8) | 23. The bird is full of thiamine (4) |
| 9. Producing endless fruit for Christmas cakes (6) | 24. Number of fingers (5) |
| 10. Fifty in carol involving Christmas bells, perhaps (8) | 25. What about the end of a white Christmas? (4) |
| 12. It weakens the spirit when party's held back (4) | 28. Like a gaudily-wrapped present? Small child hides disappointment (8) |
| 13. Prepares gifts and cards (5) | 29. It may be worn for the party (6) |
| 14. Bet it's neat rum! (4) | 30. Swapping presents - the impudence! (8) |
| 17. Opening words of a favourite carol from her list of ten (3,5,4) | 31. Vera is seen out at university party (4,2) |



Down

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Mistletoe, for example, needs trim as it comes in (8) | 15. He plays a simple part in pantomime (5) |
| 2. Christmas present drawer (8) | 16. Kind of ribbon used for decorations (5) |
| 3. Frosty return for the Arab prince (4) | 18. Part of the turkey being pulled apart, with luck (8) |
| 5. Urge to open an original Christmas gift (12) | 19. A blooming avalanche in winter (8) |
| 6. Mince pie, cold, is impressive (4) | 21. Suggest a present for a child? Excellent! (3-3) |
| 7. A geographical description of Christmas (6) | 22. Christmas meal inside the German hostelry (6) |
| 8. Look for a goose (6) | 26. He turns up for Christmas (4) |
| 11. Party refreshments provided by wise man going round America with car (7,5) | 27. Nuts - crack almonds to start with (4) |





Light at Christmas

By Dave Hardwick

Another cell move, another wing
Slowly moving through the system.
Will I ever find some peace and quiet?
Another regime change, how many more?
The weeks come and go.
My only constant is my Wednesday mornings
When I enter another world
Focus is brought to bear on the class.
This is the hour of the week for me,
For all of us.
A time to "release the ego"
And "invite the opportunity".
Now it's time to take away those words
That will never leave me:
"Arms hanging like wet ropes."
"Thigh muscles melting like wax into the floor."
In the moment of now.
Peace in the heart,
Space in the mind,
Namaste.

from HMP Littlehey

Dave has been in touch with the PPT since 1995. This is an extract from his book, *A Life of Sentences*, which is available to buy from bookshops or online for £8.99.

When I received my last sentence, those two and a half years imprisonment turned out to be the beginning of something far bigger than I could ever have imagined. Despite having vowed in 1974 never to enter a church again, I accepted a job as a Chapel Orderly, as I had a strong personal faith, though I wasn't in any way a Christian. The more I got into the job, the more I felt I was part of a team doing a very important job. I began to question, to seek advice and there were others who I found a great sense of fellowship with. Particularly exciting was that they belonged to all denominations from both ends of the church spectrum.

The turning point was in Christmas 1994, when I began to feel that the preaching all pointed to me. During prayers, I began to experience a strange warmth. The love and peace and joy which blanketed the whole chapel was beyond measure. Although I was in prison, I knew that what was happening was good. Little did I know though, as I enjoyed the fellowship in the chapel on that Christmas morning that in just a few days I would experience something far more wondrous, the best thing that is ever likely to happen in my life.

On 7th January, a Saturday, we had the choice of watching a film or staying locked in our cells for the afternoon. As always, I chose to stay in my cell. I enjoyed the peace and quiet. That afternoon started like any other, although I decided I wasn't going to write any letters, I was

just going to relax. I lounged on my bed really thinking of nothing in particular. Before long my thoughts drifted towards life, what it was all about. I thought about my past and I thought about my present and when I began to bring the two together I suddenly realised that there was a pattern.

Then the doors opened, not the cell doors, but the doors of my mind. I heard myself talking to The Boss – that's what I called my God until then, and still do from time to time. I heard myself talking, "I'm not going to fight any longer. I am yours, from this point on I give myself, totally to you and from now on I am going to trust you completely. I'm in your hands, use me."

And that was it. Almost immediately I experienced such an overpowering feeling of love and peace, so much power that I could feel it actually radiating deep from my inner self engulfing me totally. I could only come to say that it felt as if warm, luxuriant air was flowing through every part of my body.

I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that what I had experienced was by far the most beautiful thing that had ever happened to me. It was as though life up to then had been in monochrome, and suddenly not only was it in full colour, it was in 3-D super format.

Gradually, over the next couple of days I came to terms that I was a totally changed person. I was a Christian. All the uncertainty flowed away as if it had never existed. All those times when I thought I was helping others it wasn't me at all, it was God using me to spread His love in a practical way.

Vasant Panchami

Vasant Panchami is a Sikh and Hindu festival to make the start of spring and the Holi season.

It is also sometimes referred to as Saraswati Puja, Shre Panchami or the Basant Festival of Kites. Vasant Panchami is celebrated early in the year - the next one is on the 24th of January 2015.

In modern times, Vasant Panchami day is often associated with Maa Saraswati, the goddess of learning, wisdom, knowledge, fine arts, refinement, science and technology. Goddess Saraswati (pictured left) is worshipped and the day is treated as her birthday. People worship Goddess Saraswati to attain enlightenment through knowledge and to rid themselves of lethargy, sluggishness and ignorance.



Animal Magic



1. Swan



Breathe out

3. Angry Cat



Breathe out

5. Down Dog
(bent knees)



Breathe out

7. Camel

Breathe out as you move,
then



Breathe in



By Brent

2. Rabbit



Breathe in

4. Happy Cat



Breathe in

6. Deep Dog
(straight knees)



Breathe in

Animals are fascinating to watch. And we have so much to learn from them when we really take the time. Even a spider crawling up your cell wall is teaching you something! We hope you enjoy the animal postures on this page. Follow the pictures and practise the series in three different ways.

1 Follow the series, 1 to 7. Can you move through it 3 times?

2 Do the series again, but this time, be aware of your breath. Do the breathing suggested underneath each pose, making sure your breathing is slow and deep. Can you do the series three times? Once you have, take a big rest, and make sure you take at least one BIG sigh during this very important rest.

3 Now that you are warmed up, you might like a challenge. Hold each animal pose for six long, steady breaths. Can you do the series in this way five times?

When you've finished, be sure to rest comfortably on your back, like a panda, and take a few relaxing sighs; you've earned it!

“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened.”

~ Anatole France (poet, journalist and novelist, 1844 - 1924)

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. One way you can help is to consider remembering us in your will. Any sum, however small, is much appreciated.

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

