



Newsletter, Summer 2015

## ROOM TO MANOEUVRE



**I**n London, there's a square I like to visit after a morning of errands, crowds and busy-ness. Nothing beats the traffic-muffling hedges, grassy lawns and places to sit, free of demands.

The splashes of flower colour and towering plane trees welcome you in. The café in the northeast corner does a great coffee. But what really draws me in are its empty spaces. It may sound obvious, but if they had stuffed this park full of fountains and features when building it - flower beds and statues and food vendors crammed in next to each other - there would be no space to move or circulate. It just wouldn't work.

As it is, the emptiness allows everything to happen: workers cat nap on sunny grass patches at lunchtime. Skateboarders - technically prohibited - practise sticking their tricks. Friends meet, hug, and sit down to chat. Mothers stroll with their babies. Plenty of room for it all.

Many people in prison who sit down each day for silent meditation say that they discover similar empty spaces, but inside themselves. They often say that their heads had become so full of worries, plans, anxieties and concerns that they couldn't think straight anymore, nor could they *stop* thinking. That happens to all of us, whether we've done a sentence or not. Similarly, there's not one person alive who doesn't know what it's like to feel penned in by an emotion - whether it's anger, fear, frustration, sadness or lethargy - to the degree that it seems like there's no wiggling out of its grip. No room for manoeuvre.

Our own breath is miraculous, and it is this quiet, gently moving miracle that many people in prison say offers them relief from a racing mind or heavy heart. Just by sitting still for five minutes and counting your out-breaths up to 10 (and starting

over when you get there), you start to create some space around the out of control heaving in your head, or begin to be lifted out of lethargy. It takes a little faith: you've got to believe that doing it might actually give you some 'breathing space'. And despite the power of your thoughts, you must believe it's worth trying to put your attention on something besides those ideas - at least while you are meditating.

When empty spaces slowly appear, difficult thoughts and emotions lose some of their power and sting. They may not go away completely or immediately, but other more helpful thoughts and feelings now have room to come forward. This is when interesting things happen. One friend, for example, wrote that each afternoon his cell door being slammed shut by officers at bang up

would poleaxe him with powerlessness. The harsh BANG! was reinforcing his frustration at not being free.

But after several weeks of meditating three times a day, something inside shifted. Without looking for a solution, a little space opened up around the helplessness, and he felt joy because he wasn't completely entrapped by that feeling. He also saw he could make a tiny adjustment, which reinforced a new and growing sense of himself and how he related to the prison: he began closing his cell door himself a few minutes before the officers made the locking-up round.



Finding space inside at HMP Greenock



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

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

~ Viktor E. Frankl, 1905 - 1997, Neurologist and Holocaust Survivor

### 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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Feel like writing? We're happy to help in any way we can with your yoga and meditation.



**From  
HMP Featherstone**

The yoga has been great. I've actually grown taller by an inch I'm sure! My core strength has improved and I no longer take painkillers for my back. I have better posture and my flexibility is improving all the time. I'm quicker, have better reflexes, but best of all, during meditation after quietening all thought, I achieved a deeper state that I found awe inspiring. I could hear everything around me –

but I was somewhere else. I could have stayed in this place forever but time was limited. I would like to achieve this state again, but I understand that in mentally reaching for this it will be beyond me. I believe I will get there. Is simply clearing the mind, sitting through thoughts and breathing always enough, I wonder?

You wrote in your last letter that all that is needed is acceptance for being in prison. I now find there is joy when one sees with the heart, and though I've fought against it my whole life, I now accept where I am and have a quiet "it's okay!". When you expect

nothing from the world – not the light of the sun, wet of water nor the air to breathe – everything is wonder and every moment a gift.

*Ed: It is great that you have found so many gifts from your yoga and meditation practice! As you note, by reaching for these states that sometimes come to us, we often unintentionally push them away. The best thing to do is to merely sit - no expectations, no goals, just the breath. To answer your question, simply sitting and being with your breath IS enough. It is plenty! Good luck.*

**From  
HMP Wormwood Scrubs**

My yoga path is always progressing. I have a wonderful teacher in the brilliant Pollyanna, who visits Wormwood Scrubs once a week. I practise every morning for a good hour and then again at night I practise yoga nidra.

I came to prison without religion, as I had lost faith many years ago whilst I was a serving soldier. During my time as a soldier I saw much genocide and despair in many countries. Through yoga I have started to lean towards Buddhism and have now converted. I just wish that I had found yoga a long time ago, but I feel I have had to learn what has happened and what I have seen in my life to become the person I am becoming.

Maybe all of the past was a test. In these last months I have noticed a change in my perception and how I



# Prisoners'

generally go about my life now.

**From  
HMP Wakefield**

Two weeks ago I got your CD, *Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Mind*, and it's never off the stereo! I simply love it and strangely, can't imagine what I used to do on a night before re-igniting my yoga experience again. The relaxation and feeling of total fulfilment is second to none and is really keeping me focussed on non-smoking. Being able to really appreciate each breath taken makes it hard to understand why I ever smoked in the first place!

Since I received *We're All Doing Time* I have been reading it when I can. As a devout Christian I can relate so much to the body being a temple and I simply love the cross reference to God and the Bible. I find that I want to keep on reading more and more each time, I just don't want to do it all at once, or I will end up with nothing else to read!

**From  
HMP Haverigg**

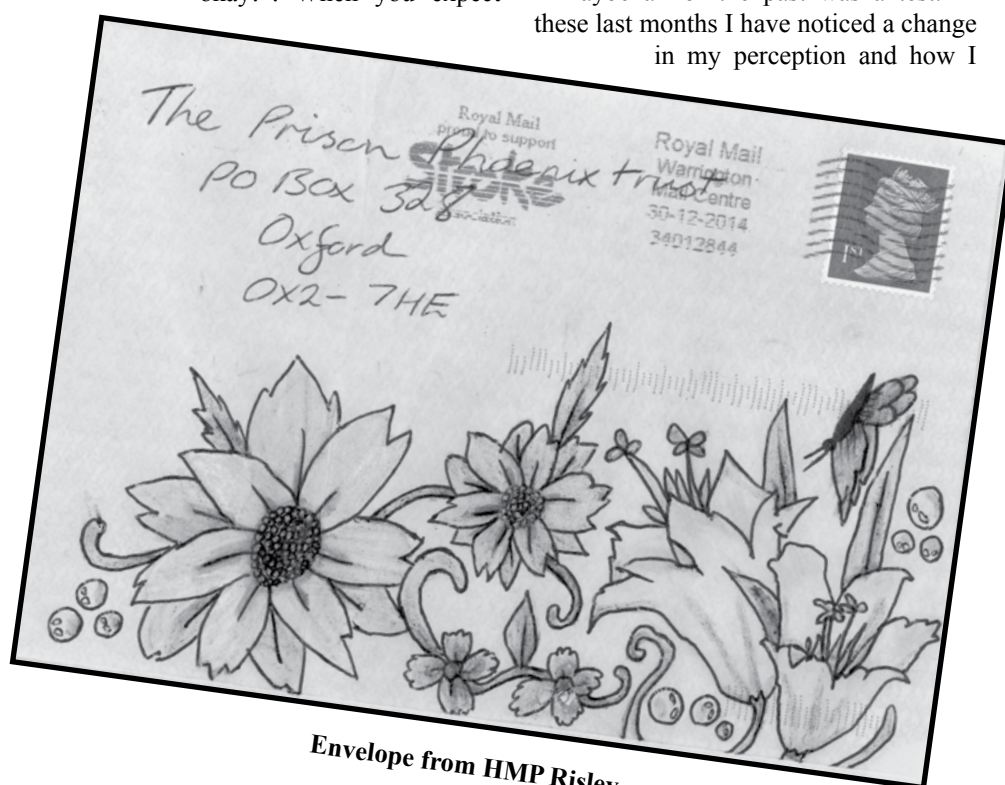
I have been really stressed out lately and I thought to myself, I'll give this Cell Bed Yoga a go. To be honest I didn't think anything of it, but it really did help me relax. I was surprised. I am just a beginner at yoga but it really helps me to chill out. I am finding the breathing part the hardest to get used to. I'm the same at the gym – I cannot seem to get my breathing correct no matter how hard I try.

I saw the notice in *Inside Time* for a free book and CD – can I get a copy of them please? I would love to learn the correct techniques to help me conquer my yoga.



**From  
HMP Nottingham**

I am putting into practice your article in the *Inside Time* newspaper March edition. I have found it most useful in more ways than one. Having anger issues, it has helped me accept my circumstances and calm down. It's definitely helped me reach



Envelope from HMP Risley



# Letters

inner peace. Completing a set routine every night has me sleeping easier, as if I had attended a gym session. I find it also makes me feel better about myself. I've been depressed, having lived on the streets since August last year.

Doing the few exercises has changed my whole outlook on life and now I cannot wait for my release date to start my new life having built up my self pride and esteem.



**From  
HMP Liverpool**

I have been in recovery from heroin and crack cocaine addiction for two and a half months now. I'm serving 15 months, but have come to a point in my life where I've realised I have to make some big changes.

I have been doing your simple yoga examples in the February edition of

*Inside Time*. I am feeling so much better, and am also looking to incorporate yoga and meditation into my daily recovery routine as I seem to feel so much better when I use yoga every day.

I would really appreciate it if you could send me a copy of your book. I am still young in my meditation journey.

**From  
HMP Littlehey**

Ten months ago I enrolled in the Littlehey yoga classes and I have never missed a lesson. Our wonderful teacher is Ms Cherie and the weekly lesson is held every Wednesday morning in our main gym hall. How fortunate we are to have such a patient and reliable teacher.

Recently we had an influx of inmates on transfer and the class is now well attended. I am 72, so some of the balance positions do prove difficult, but standing near the wall as suggested really helps.

My dear wife has practised yoga with weekly classes for the last 25 years



and just imagine that me, like so many men used to think that it was a "ladies' pastime". How wrong can one be! When I return home I will continue with yoga lessons hopefully at the same class as my wife.

About a year ago I met an inmate here who always seemed very down, linked, I believe, to his long sentence. After a while he really brightened up so I assumed that he was on anti-depressants. I suggested this to him but imagine my surprise when he replied, "I am not taking tablets but have been practicing yoga in my cell every day." His change was a true metamorphosis. He joined the yoga class, becoming the star pupil. Ms Cherie is impressed by his progress, as we all are.

*Check out our yoga and meditation column each month in Inside Time!*



## Meditation Corner

# The Right Response



**By Sandy**

A friend writing from the PIPE Unit at HMP Frankland yesterday talked about seeing young blackbirds bouncing about just a few feet away from where he works on a little vegetable plot. "They don't have a care in the world and they're completely unaware of all the dangers," he said.

Blackbirds don't have a clue about whether they should fend for themselves. They just gobble up the insects their parents push down their beaks and when they fly the nest, they go off without a backwards glance.

We aren't so different from blackbirds actually, but we don't allow ourselves to live carefree lives. We think we must be in control.

One of the beautiful aspects of the daily practice of meditation is that when the mind quiets down in the absorption of the breath, you find yourself in touch with something else. It is a sort of fundamental essence that includes everyone and everything. And in our deepest self, we know it intimately and know it can never be extinguished.

Touching this essence every day by

inhaling and exhaling in meditation, we gradually start to trust a deeper aspect in our life. We realise that possibilities are arising all the time, never when we expect it, never when we want it. But in the changing moment of a day, creativity is always at work.

Then we can let go completely because our essential nature turns out to be a trustworthy and reliable guide. By riding it like a wave we can let it take us through the day. However old you are, wherever you are, now you can start living.

Even in prison you can be without a care in the world – if you trust that this sacred essence works appropriately and you allow it to do its own perfect work.

When you are in harmony with your deepest self, the right response springs out. And that's nothing you can work out in advance.

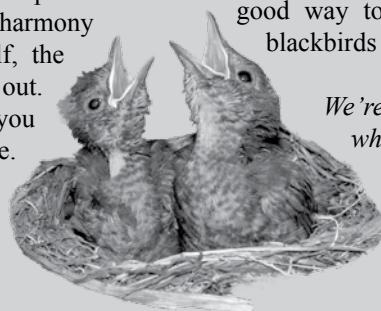
A meditator in HMP Woodhill said once that the retribution he expected after

he decided to front up to a debt, was never delivered. He wondered if it was something about his genuinely calm acceptance which changed the situation and took away the violence.

A Buddhist nun once told me a terrifying story about walking in the Himalayas and having a bear spring off a ledge and grasp her head in his mouth. Without thinking, a huge roar of an OM sound welled up from within her and hearing it, the bear let go and left. She was badly hurt at the time but a fellow climber took her to safety and a doctor. In telling the story, the nun said the sound sprang out of what seemed a total paralysis of fear but it seems it was not so.

The right response springs out all the time - if we don't get in the way. It's a good way to live – like those young blackbirds you hear singing outside...

*We're delighted that Sandy, who used to teach yoga and meditation in prisons across the UK and Ireland, was able to write this Meditation Corner.*





# A Free Man

From HMP Lewes

I hoped I would write to you as a free man, but as you can see this is not the case. The Home Office decided to keep me in custody beyond the terms of my sentence, which is absurd because I've won my immigration case. My solicitor told me she is trying to arrange for my release through a bail hearing, but this may take between one and three weeks. What was worse in all this story is that a clerk from the Home Office came to see me one week ago and told me I was going to be released. This information had been given to the prison and to my probation officer too, so that everyone was surprised and disgusted when I received the letter that prevented my release.

The Home Office sent it right on the evening before I would have left. By that time my Dad had come all the way from Italy and my friends here had booked Tuesday off from work. I... well, what my practice teaches me is that there is no benefit in planning too much for the future or believing too much in expectation. I should not have let my mind get too excited. But after my father and my friends visited me on Monday and my probation officer confirmed I was going to be released, I just couldn't help but let myself caress the idea of going back out there. And as I did so, life struck one of its lessons about non-attachment.

## Choosing to let go

The prison's yoga teacher came to see me on that day, so he helped me detach from both frustration and physical feelings of anger. I couldn't sleep much, but I gathered myself together, got down to the floor and begun to let tension find a way out in powerful asanas like warrior and crow. On Wednesday I managed to appreciate the importance of the insights I could get from my suffering. Today I managed to forgive both the Home Office and life in general.

What is happening remains totally

unfair, but I don't have to identify with thoughts of bitterness. I chose to let go of thoughts of resentment and to let my inner sense of well-being emerge even in the midst of troubles.



Mental discipline and understanding that the bigger picture is always more important than the passing details have been fundamental for finding peace and spiritual growth despite the external challenges.

Now my practice has truly received the test of time.

Through a mindful approach to uncertainty and hardship I am now freer and stronger than ever.

What you wrote me last time makes even more sense now; and when the day comes for me and my family to be reunited, I will simply share my life with them and let my silent example speak for itself. I once read that everything is both *dukkha* and *dhamma*, a path to *nibbana* or an aspect of *samsara*, depending on the way the mind approaches or sees it. Now I kind of get what this means.

## Deep truth

Although I can't deny that experiencing bliss while meditating on my reaction to the "bad" news of these days seemed very illogical and awkward at first, it definitely showed me some deep truth. You said that after release I "simply" need to let my life become my practice, rather than trying to daydream now about what I should or should not do. No need to worry, right? At the end of the day all I have, really, is the present moment, so let's keep my practice rooted in the present...

I've stuck the letter from the Home Office up on the wall of my cell. I'm doing everything I can to fight for my release. I don't need to suffer for what I can't change. I don't need hatred. I don't need anger. I don't need to keep making up stories about a self who doesn't deserve "this" and will only be truly happy out of prison. I look at the paper and I don't feel anything... And somehow this lack of feeling feels good!

Life on the Out

# Reaching a Better Place

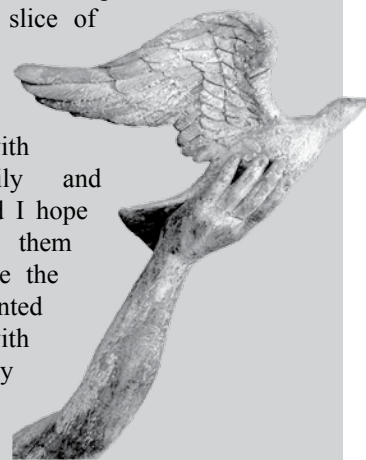
by Dawn

I send you my love and greetings from outside the prison walls. I thank you for your words of encouragement mixed with kindness and much wisdom. The yoga book and CD helped me reach a better place inside!! I have lovingly carried the wonderful books by Bo Lozoff. They changed my life really and I carry them into my new life full of peace, love, joy.

I got my head down inside. I practised my yoga every day. Now I am in a better place. My home for now is near the Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. The garden has beautiful sandstone sculptures by Jimmy Boyle. He was an inmate in Shotts. There is a four foot high arm from elbow upright with a dove sitting in the finger tips.

I have been here since June. I have thanked God every day for bringing me from the difficult place to a little slice of heaven.

I have had good contact with my family and friends and I hope to visit them after I lose the tag. I wanted to share with you my joy at being given this kindness.



*Dawn has now returned home to Africa to be with her husband.*

## Buddhist Terms Explained



### Dukkha

Suffering, dissatisfaction or stress

### Dhamma

The true nature of reality; the teachings of the Buddha

### Nibbana

Freedom from greed, anger and delusion

### Samsara

The suffering that arises through not understanding Dhamma



# A Beautiful Feeling

From HMP Liverpool



**D**ear Sir/Madam,

That sounds too official, as I feel I know you better from sitting with you.

I hope this finds you well in both health and spirits. I am a lifer, 18 months into a 23 year tariff (as it stands). While on remand you sent me *Freeing the Spirit Through Meditation and Yoga* and the CD *Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body*. Not having a CD player, I struggled with the book, though I shared a cell at that time and some of my padmates were interested. So I went back to cell circuits (cardio).

Now I'm in a single cell and with a CD player I decided at Christmas to give it another go and have done it every evening since. I feel I have benefited so much from it both physically and spiritually. I have become a lot more supple already and my body is much more naturally relaxed. I can feel all the tension leaving my body, which is a beautiful feeling as you can imagine all the stress and tension I was holding with such a tariff.

Also spiritually I find the breathing exercises so relaxing and like the meditation I find myself taking a minute out during the day and having a go in my chair. I feel a type of freeness and I'm so much happier and more considerate to others. For this I would like you to feel my gratitude and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

A couple of questions I'd like to ask:

- Is it okay to do yoga and meditate with eyes closed? I find cell walls ugly. I do light a joss stick and place it with some fruit, but I'm often in a position where I'm not facing it.
- Sitting in the meditation pose, is it normal for my feet to go numb? It takes a minute or two for the blood to return to my feet after a session.
- Is there another CD? It would be nice to break the routine of the same asanas every day as I know there are others.

*Ed: To answer your questions...*

- *There's nothing wrong with practising some of the yoga postures and movements with your eyes closed. It can help you focus more on how the body is moving and feeling. And having them closed in certain balancing postures, like the tree, can give you an extra challenge. On the other hand, one of the great pay offs of yoga and meditation is being able to accept exactly where you are and to be with what is difficult. It's easy to associate closing your eyes with trying to escape what is difficult. But this practice is not about escaping. So there's no hard and fast answer for you Denis. Just keep in mind what the*

*practice*

*is for and do what is right.*

*When it comes to meditation, we*

*recommend keeping your eyes open. We are*

*surrounded by Truth at every moment, never*

*separated from it. Sometimes when the*

*heart and mind are given a chance to be stiller,*

*this Truth shouts to us in the call of a bird, or winks from a chip in the wall. Without looking for these moments, but keeping the senses open, including the eyes, we are more available to them.*

- *It is normal for your feet to go numb when meditating. Almost everyone who meditates encounters this at some point. As long as it is only when you meditate, and not at other times, the numbness won't hurt you.*
- *We are making another CD. This double CD will feature four different yoga and breathing lessons, as well as two relaxations and two meditations. The CD will be made from episodes of our radio program, currently playing on National Prison Radio, Fridays at noon and 7 am and 6 pm Sunday. It will be ready in September.*

## Hope Springs Eternal

Annual Lecture with Erwin James, introduced by Jeremy Irons

7.00 pm, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2015

St John's College Oxford



Erwin James

We are pleased to announce that Erwin James will be drawing on his experience as a Guardian journalist covering prisons and criminal justice, as well as his 20 years inside as a life prisoner when he speaks to Prison Phoenix Trust friends and supporters in September.

Erwin will examine instances of prison practice that work best, looking to Sweden, where politics is kept out of prisons, to Norway, whose prisons aim

to mimic life outside, and to examples of successful projects and trends in other prison systems including the UK. In particular he will shine a light on the role played by outside and voluntary agencies in prisons in this country and discuss their value in bringing hope for a brighter future for prisoners and prison staff, and a safer future for society.

Guests will also hear briefly about *Freedom Inside*, the weekly yoga and meditation show being broadcast this year on National Prison Radio. Erwin presents the 5-minute introductions to each 50-minute yoga and meditation session of that programme.

Erwin will be introduced by his fellow PPT Patron Jeremy Irons, if he isn't in the middle of filming a movie! Jeremy read extracts from prisoners' letters for the radio show introductions. These are two great voices and human beings we know you'll enjoy hearing on the evening.

To buy tickets, send £10 per person to the Prison Phoenix Trust, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF, including the names and e-mail addresses of those attending.



Jeremy Irons





# Opening Books

From HMP Greenock

**W**ould it be possible to send me another copy of *We're All Doing Time*? I have given mine away to a friend. I know I shouldn't have but he was in more need of it than me. I had been studying the book religiously on a daily basis and thought I'd be comfortable without it but lo and behold, like a missing arm, I need it.

I must thank you, on this opportunity, for the last book as it gave me everything and more. It answered all my questions on how to meditate properly which I use on a daily basis. And I was inspired by all the letters from others in the jail, every one of which had experienced the same problems I had.

I now know that my thoughts are the key to how I feel. If I think in a negative manner I will create negative emotions. My emotions have been problematic in the past, and I felt at a loss, helpless.

I had no one to turn to. I trusted no one. I couldn't rely on no one

due to let-downs in the past and any form of emotion was viewed as weakness. I was trapped in a vicious cycle due to my insecurities.

I put up so many walls to protect myself that no one could penetrate. I used one emotion for all to see which was anger. I viewed it as the norm, one in which all knew and one in which everyone could relate to. Anger was my release, it was my problem solver. I could rely on it and I felt it would never let me down. I didn't view it as a negative. It gave me confidence, I felt powerful, my friends viewed me as one of the boys. Well, so I thought.

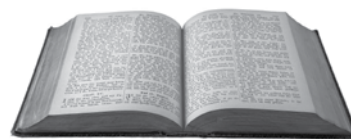
With anger comes violence: the two go hand in hand, and sadly my whole lifestyle was violence. I solved all my problems with the use of violence which I'm ashamed of. But it isn't all doom and gloom. I have found the one thing I had been searching for which is guidance, someone to take my hand and show me how to regulate my emotions. *We're All Doing Time*, self help books like *I'm OK*, *You're OK*, and the offending behaviour groups I've done in the past, have all helped to give me structure, a solid

foundation. I feel I have a purpose, I feel I belong. I know I have the confidence to walk this path of positivity and lead a violence-free lifestyle.

I know my anger will always be there - it's a part of me - but instead of it being a loose cannon, I'm in control. I use my meditation to calm myself down, and to regulate all the other emotions that come with it.

Emotions are a part of life. Knowing what emotions are and how to channel them through meditation gives me the key to unlock the doors what have been welded shut for years due to my insecurities. Now I'm an open book; I can talk about my emotions and not feel judged. So, thank you!

I hope I can encourage others due to your book. I'm a firm believer in hope and with the right tools we can all have hope.



## An Attitude of Gratitude

**T**his simple, deep breathing exercise is a great way to calm and relax the body and mind on its own.

If you want to add another dimension try mentally reciting a 'gratitude list' once your breathing is settled and steady. An attitude of gratitude can help to remove feelings of anger. It's difficult to be angry and thankful at the same time.

What is a gratitude list? Well it's anything, no matter how big or small, that you're thankful for in your life (past or present). It doesn't have to be virtuous or grand. Start with the small stuff (chocolate!) and see what happens. Things that we might take for granted like: running water; your favourite food; a good book, favourite CD; a good friend; hot radiators on a cold night; having a body and mind to appreciate the world around us. The list is as boundless as your imagination and by focusing on what we have, we can develop a more flexible attitude to the challenges that life throws across our path.

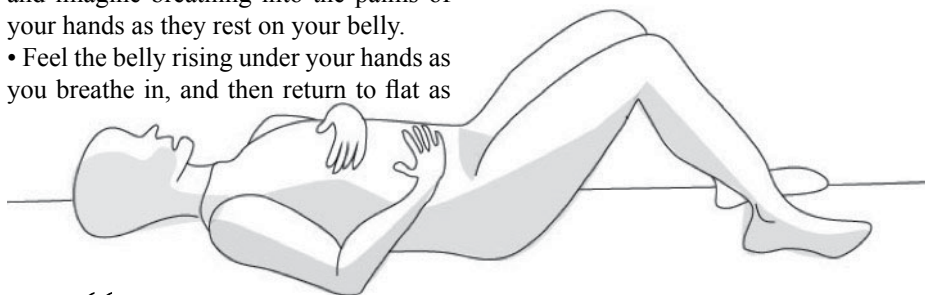


By Victoria

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor, a comfortable distance from the bottom. Place your hands on the lower belly.
- For 5 breaths simply observe how your natural breath moves in and out of your body. Don't try to change or influence it - just notice.
- Breathe in and out through the nostrils and imagine breathing into the palms of your hands as they rest on your belly.
- Feel the belly rising under your hands as you breathe in, and then return to flat as

you breathe out.

- Take it gently and gradually for 10 to 20 breaths. You can't force calmness.
- If you can do the above exercise comfortably - add the gratitude list on the breath.
- As you inhale, in your mind say "Thank you for..." and on the out breath say in your mind "person, object, place, idea" - whatever you appreciate having, experiencing or knowing.



**"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank You,' it will be enough."**

— Meister Eckhart, 1260 - 1328, German Mystic

# Looking Past the Uniform

by Benjamin Zephaniah, PPT Patron



**Benjamin collects an honorary degree from the University of Hull**

**I** was in a prison called Winson Green, which is now Birmingham prison, and I had a little thing going on with one of the prison officers. He discovered that I like martial arts, and he used to come and do the night shift and he had a little room at the bottom of the corridor, and when everybody else was asleep he used to come and let me out. I don't know how technically allowed that was, but we'd move his desk to one side of his room and then we would spar and spar and spar, karate style. And at the end of it we used to sit down and do a couple of minutes just meditating - deep breathing, we didn't really call it meditation - just like calming down, centring ourselves. Then I'd go back to my cell, and in the morning he'd let me sleep a little extra.

I remember saying to him one day, "I'm glad you do this with me because it's really good for me", and he said, "It's good for me too." So actually, if prison staff practised yoga, and we had prisoners practising yoga - come on: it just makes for a more harmonious environment. People will understand people a lot better. They'll respect each other more. It is genuinely a win-win situation.

Like everyone, prison officers have stresses and strains in the job. We kind of think that prison officers - when I was a kid, we used to call them screws - are all the same. But that's like them thinking that all prisoners are the same. They have their own internal politics, they don't all get on with each other. There are different tribes within their community. And most of them - regardless of what we say about people in uniform -

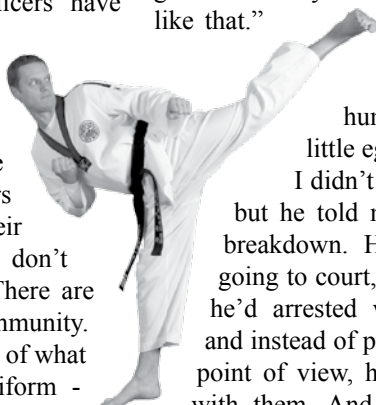
*Benjamin Zephaniah is a writer, musician and activist from Birmingham. Author of 14 poetry books, six albums, four novels and seven plays, he is Professor of Poetry and Creative Writing at Brunel University.*

*Benjamin told us this story when we stopped by his office to record his thoughts on breathing, meditation, kung fu, natural intelligence, and how to get through prison, for the yoga and meditation we're broadcasting on National Prison Radio (see below right).*

they're not all there because they're on a power trip. Some of them genuinely, genuinely want to try and do good and help people. I can see them trying to reach out sometimes and not feeling that they're going to get that from the prisoners, it's not a touchy feely situation. And I can understand why they're going to feel frustrated. Because it doesn't matter how you cut it, they have a uniform on. And the prisoners, if they have a uniform, it's the uniform of prison. There's very few things that bring them together. There's very few things that they can relate to together, maybe. But if they're practising, like me and this guy who were practising martial arts together, doing a little bit of deep breathing together, it's the one thing we could do together. And as he said, it helped him just as much as it helped me.

## High on fresh air

I have a friend who's a police officer. For a long time he didn't tell me. When I found out, I went in and said, "You're a police officer?" and he said "Yeah". I said, "Why didn't you tell me?" He said, "because I know you have a stereotypical view of police officers, and me and you get on really well. And I'm not like that."



And he was a genuinely nice, compassionate, humble person. Very little ego about him.

I didn't see him for a while, but he told me after he'd had a breakdown. He told me he was going to court, and the people who he'd arrested were saying things, and instead of putting the policeman point of view, he was just agreeing with them. And his superiors were

saying, "Come on, come on, you've got to defend yourself." He said he was starting to hallucinate, all kinds of things. And it was the pressure of the job. He was trying to really be a good cop, but at the same time he had to arrest people. And then he's got to go to court, and it's very adversarial. And he said he just couldn't take it. He'd come home, have a pint and then just go back to work and do the same thing again. I said to him, you've got to find something else to do.

There's strains on all of us - it's not just police or prison officers. I believe that the kind of society we've created, where you spend so much time working, is unnatural. It's all right for people who are in the creative world - people who teach yoga and stuff they like. But most people in the world go to a job they don't like doing, with people they don't like doing it with. I always think of them - that's the majority of the people. So it's going to be very, very stressful, and they have to find a way out. Now, a lot of them, unfortunately that'll be alcohol and other things. That's alright in short amount, but can be very destructive. Everybody wants to get high. But I've just learned how to get high on fresh air - literally, fresh air.

## Turn On, Tune In, Stretch Out

Want to try yoga and meditation in your cell with a private tutor? You're in luck. A weekly yoga and meditation class called *Freedom Inside* is currently airing on National Prison Radio. The show is on at 7 am and 6 pm on Sundays and at noon on Fridays. You'll be able to join in easily whether you've done yoga and meditation before or not. Erwin James will introduce each programme, with guests Benjamin Zephaniah (see above), Jeremy Irons, and prisoners who practise yoga. Three Prison Phoenix Trust teachers will walk you through 45 minutes of yoga postures, relaxation and meditation, helping you find a sense of freedom in yourself, even while you're still inside.



# Chill Out Yoga



By Lucy



**W**e all have times when we feel like we need to just chill out. This might be because of anger, stress, anxiety, or even excitement. It might not be because something is wrong - it's nice to just relax at the end of a

busy day. Whatever the reason for wanting to calm down and let go of worries, yoga can help you do just that.

As you do these simple poses, focus on your breath. Keep your breathing slow and deep, and really enjoy each lungful. As the poses help release tension in your body, watching your breathing will help let go of the tension in your mind. You can always come back to the breath any time you need some peace.

1.



10 slow breaths

2.



5 slow breaths

3.



5 slow breaths

4.



5 slow breaths

5.



10 slow breaths

6.



5 slow breaths  
each side

7.



20 slow breaths

8.



Sit upright, on a pillow or a couple of books if you have them. Relax everything, and begin counting the breath silently - in, 1, out, 2, in, 3, out, 4... Up to ten then start again from one. If you lose count don't worry, just start again from one. Do this for 10 minutes every day.

**“One cool judgement is worth a thousand hasty councils.  
The thing to do is to supply light and not heat.”**

*~ Woodrow Wilson, 1856 - 1924, 28<sup>th</sup> President of the United States*

*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.*

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