

Newsletter, Autumn 2016



WAKING UP AWAKE



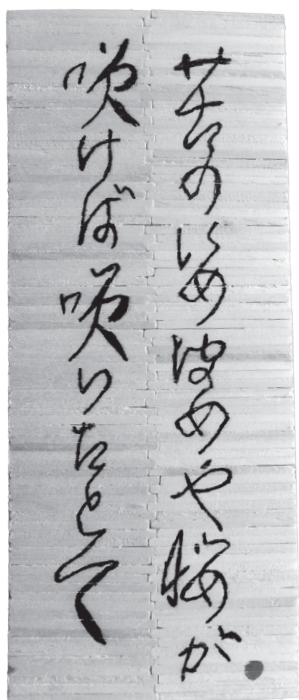
A man wakes up in his bed. Immediately on becoming conscious, he's paying attention to what is happening inside himself: he tastes the quiet and stillness inside himself that are there naturally from sleep. He's aware of his breathing: easy, relaxed, deep.

He feels the weight of his heels, calves, bum, back, against the bed; the pillow beneath his head. His arm itches but he doesn't scratch. 'What's it like to have a little itch and not scratch it?' he thinks. He sees how the itch passes after a few seconds. He's aware of becoming awake, and with attention grounded in his breathing, he sees the second thought: 'Here I am, stuck in this depressing, bleak place for another day.'

Focussed inside

He keeps his attention focussed inside himself and notices his breathing becoming shallow and faster as a result of the thought, and his stomach and shoulders beginning to tighten slightly. He chooses to take three slow, long, deep breaths. On each out-breath he reminds himself that every moment is precious, and also that he has some control over what goes on inside himself, over his life. During the third breath, he happens to remember someone going out of their way yesterday to help him get signed on to a course he wants to do. He also remembers his own kindness a few days back towards a fellow prisoner who was feeling low and out of sorts.

He notices his lips forming a faint smile, his breathing becoming more relaxed again. He sees that the tension in his shoulders and belly is almost gone. Something like curiosity about what else the day might bring has crept in. He reflects that in the space of less than a minute, he has gone from feeling hopeless and powerless to curious and engaged. He decides



"A world of grief and pain - flowers bloom even then"
Calligraphy on matchsticks
from HMP Glenochil

to do three things, just for this day: (1) keep watching his own mind as much as he can; (2) try to take all the ups and downs in his mind with a pinch of salt; and (3) offer kindness to at least two other people, and to be open to receiving help for himself, wherever it might come from.

Waking up from sleep is fascinating. Those first few moments between stillness and activity hold a precious gift, waiting to be discovered. If you remember – immediately on waking – to pay attention to how your heart and mind are, you can see thoughts and feelings starting. It's easier to do this when the mind is relatively quiet – not jumping around from one thing to another, as it tends to do when fully awake. Seeing the origin of a thought is a massive gift, because it's a chance to see how thoughts lead to feeling one way or another, to see how thoughts affect your outlook, and even to how they affect you physically.

But what if our thoughts and feelings are so strong and out of control that we find it impossible to be still and pay attention to what's going on inside ourselves? Sometimes things happen to us which means our whole system – body and mind – is wired for the worst, and can't relax easily. The postures, movements, breathing practices and relaxation of yoga are highly effective in releasing long-held tension in the body. Yoga offers a way of healing old hurts by working through the body and the breath, and, together with meditation, of allowing stillness to guide our lives, rather than out-dated stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.

We hope you enjoy the letters and articles from other people who find themselves locked up, who are nonetheless waking up to a sense of freedom and healing.



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

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.



“Be at least as interested in what goes on inside you as what happens outside. If you get the inside right, the outside will fall into place.”

~ Eckhart Tolle, writer and mystic,
b. 1948

Check out the yoga and meditation column each month in *Inside Time* and tune into our radio programme 3 times a week on National Prison Radio.



From
HMP Highpoint

Unfortunately there is no yoga available here. I do however

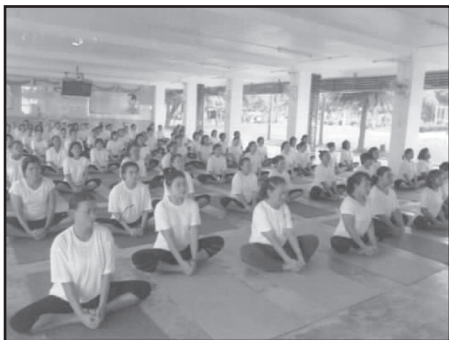
try to do a little in my cell, on top of my regular meditations. I last attended yoga classes at HMP Aylesbury, between 2008-2010. If possible please pass on my regards to Hugh, Lindy and Dot, who were teaching at that time. I never had a chance to thank them when I had to move on to an adult establishment.

Unfortunately I am serving a lengthy sentence and heading into my tenth year. This is my first time in prison, and my first arrest. The wrong time, wrong place and wrong crowd has cost me a lot of years out of my life. Through my initial introduction to yoga, I have become a practising Buddhist, and have been for more than eight years. This has helped me incredibly and my whole outlook has changed for the better. All of it initially started through yoga and the good people who were teaching it.

From
Rayong Women's
Prison, Thailand

As I am speaking, I am getting better and better at meditation and try my best to keep my mind at peace. Sitting for 15 minutes every morning at 5.15 has got me going without laziness, but I'm still not there yet as my mind keeps thinking about things around me. It's not easy to put it together. I'll keep trying though.

Your recent book is very informative



Women prisoners practice yoga in Thailand

and easy to understand. The weather in Thailand is extremely hot and, of course, humid. At first it was very difficult to move around but with four years in prison, I've gotten used to it already. I can practise for hours without any drop of sweat! I'll let you know how I am doing with my balance.

I believe I'll become a better person, after going through hard life, getting angry easily, hot tempered and even getting irritated at any situation. But now things have changed. My life has become new! With yoga and positive energy from you, I am beginning to feel so good with myself. I am able to calm myself down more easily than before. This is the beauty of being a yogi.

I've attached a photo with this letter. With yoga I find happiness! I call it "Freedom Behind Bars".



From
HMP Lewes

I have been here about ten weeks now, both on the main wing and in Health Care due to psychological / stress related pressures. I am 54 and expect to be in prison for a good few years. I have been using the yoga routine you published in *Inside Time* and find it useful, soothing, de-stressing, helpful, relaxing and calming.

If I start my day with a yoga routine it runs better than if not. We are on a tight regime here, 21 hours a day shut away, no educational opportunities, no activities, no therapy or work. If I'm lucky I get gym once a week, 40 minutes a day round the yard and an hour's association.

I am lucky enough to have a single cell which helps me reduce stress and work on self improvement, awareness, etc. I turn the telly off more than on, am attempting to do art therapy, read, exercise and do mental puzzles in my cell to remain sane. Paul, the yoga guy, has helped with some breathing exercises through the door. No yoga sessions though, due to low staff levels.

From
HMP Channings
Wood

Currently I am undertaking an SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Program) course, which has been very challenging emotionally and mentally but I have retained my resolve, remaining committed and determined. This



Prisoners'

however would have been made more difficult and challenging if I didn't have the access to the meditation sessions you provide on National Prison Radio and the articles in the *Inside Times* newspaper. Every evening when I've been locked away I do the exercises from the 'Waking Up With Yoga' article. This has been so incredibly useful for me after a stressful day from completing an SOTP group session.

The yoga and breathing has really helped me remain calm and rationally minded, and as a result I have been able to reflect clearly about my previous offending behaviour. It's helping me overcome my past.



From
HMP Maghaberry

I get what you're saying about meditation being a daily foundation. The first thing I do in the morning is yoga, then meditation. After that I read a poem, the same poem every day, called *Invictus*. Then I read another poem, a new one each day, from a poetry collection. Then I have a coffee and study some Vedanta (Indian scriptures). Usually around lunchtime I also do formal meditation.

I say "formal" because I've found that everything, this whole life, can be, is, a meditation. Sure, there are interruptions, but that accessible place within, so readily found during meditation, is always accessible. I've found that not only is it within, it is also outside. To go further, it is all there is.

When I know I am that which I am seeing and experiencing, the desire to do something, the need to do anything to access what is already present isn't there. It is extremely blissful in formal meditation, because of this knowledge and the complete dispassion toward any need in sitting. When there is nothing left to get, give, want, achieve, all that is there is all that is. All that ever was. Fullness. Completeness. Bliss. Love.

I'm in about ten months now, with my trial likely in the autumn sometime. That's fine, I just get on with things. My priority is using this opportunity I have to reflect on the past and restructure my life. I am pleased with the way things are.

There has been a lot of healing going on with my personal life with my family, and my teachers of Vedanta have asked if I will help run their internet forum when I get

Letters

out. God has blessed me with a solid, excellent opportunity. I'm not going to allow anything to get in the way of that. I still have possibilities of a great future, after everything.



From
HMP Lindholme...

This is a big year for me. I should be moving to open conditions: YES!!! It's been a long time coming and of course I have discovered a lot within these prison walls and within myself. I feel excited, anxious, delighted, nervous, young, old, lively, tired - all kinds of emotions.

I once wrote to you that yoga had become my coping mechanism, my best friend, my sanctuary. I discovered a part of me that belongs to me, and no one or nothing can take it away.

I'm now mentoring a blind prisoner four times a week. He comes to the gym to do weights and cardio. So I've

introduced him to yoga and every Sunday morning, I go to his cell and do about 90 minutes of yoga with him. When it's nice, I take him outside on the yard for half an hour. He is only 24 and has been blind for about four or five months, the last two of which he has been with me for lessons and is always upbeat and positive. He has gained so much confidence and if you were to stand and watch us on our mats you would not know he had a disability.

This experience is by far the best and most satisfying feeling I have ever felt.

... and HMP Hatfield

I've now moved to the Lakes. Sounds lovely, eh? Well it really is, compared to where I've been the last six years. Everything here is laid back unless you're stupid enough not to let it be that way. The staff are chilled unless you are in their faces and there is so much positivity about the place.

There are certain things you have to comply with, but mostly you are left to get on with it. The next step is to an open

prison. I get my first town visit at the end of August. I am elated, but also a little apprehensive.

There is so much positivity towards yoga and for me to teach it. I've got a job as a gym orderly and there has been a lot of talk from lads about me helping them and teaching them in yoga.

So they have given me my own class time on Sunday mornings. There is room for ten and it has been full the last three Sundays and I have a reserve list of four.

When it's nice we get to go out on the grass. The gym staff join in too. It's been a blessing coming here. They have just ordered 20 yoga mats for us.

When people first speak with you about starting yoga, they nearly always start with, "I'm not bendy at all; I have no flexibility; I can't do this; I can't do that." I say to them, "Let's start with erasing the negatives. Let's begin with 'I can only do so much and I would like to improve my flexibility and my health.' This way we are starting with positives."

I know I'm still in prison, but with each passing week, I am starting to really look forwards again. It's been a while since I felt like this.

Meditation Corner

Seeing is Believing

If you've read our books or listened to our CDs you already know that we recommend meditating with your eyes open. This may seem strange especially if you feel that meditation should take your mind away from prison. Actually, meditation isn't about escaping, but instead stepping more fully into life. Even our latest radio show on NPR and CD are called *Freedom Inside*, but opening the eyes seems to suggest that freedom is actually found outside! This is one of those puzzles that will never make sense, but can easily be resolved when the mind stops thinking.

This is a good practice to try before bed, or when you are planning to rest afterwards. Sit with the spine straight and perfectly upright. Try to line your ears up with your shoulders and then sit as still as possible. Keep the eyes open and gently focussed upon a spot a few feet in front of you. Turn your attention to your breathing. Just breathe silently through the nose and count the inhalation as 'one', and then the exhalation as 'two'. The next inhalation is 'three'. Try to keep each breath even and natural. Count each breath until you reach



By Jason

ten and then begin from one again. If you lose count, or the mind wanders, just start from the beginning again.

Keep your eyes open and not moving, though of course you will blink from time to time – and just allow thoughts to come and go. You may notice that your cell (or wherever you are) has details that you previously did not notice. These may be marks on the wall, a pipe in the corner of the room, the metal legs of a chair, or a shadow being cast across the bed. These don't matter at all. Just keep counting the breath. After a few minutes you may notice thoughts and objects coming and going, over and over. This is a restful state, allowing anxieties and fears to release naturally. Do this for ten minutes.

Afterwards, you may find that the items in your room appear to be positioned in just the right places, and even take on an artistic quality. Curves, shadows, straight lines, different shades of colour emerging and receding. But don't try to make this happen – just keep focussing upon your



breath and see what happens. The question about whether freedom is found inside or outside may now seem irrelevant, and you may be unable to decide if what you are "seeing" is happening outside or inside. Allow yourself to remain in this state for a few minutes, and then if it is the right time of day, go to bed and allow yourself to sleep.

When you awaken you may find your surroundings (and the people you meet) are a little more colourful and vibrant than before, and your mind has more clarity and peace. If you can practice regularly, these qualities will develop and could deepen even when you don't think you're meditating! Remember that something remarkable is always right before your eyes – wherever you find yourself.



Time for a Deep Clean?



By Victoria

We all have helpful daily rituals like washing our face, brushing our teeth in the morning and again before we sleep. Just as we cleanse our outer body, we can use the sequence below to clear the lungs and sweep out negative thoughts. Try this sequence every day for a week. Don't rush or hold your breath. This takes 5-10 minutes and is good preparation for a yoga or meditation session.

Getting Started

1. First, blow your nose to clear any blockages. Sit cross-legged with padding under you so your legs and hips are comfortable (try a rolled up towel or pillow). Or sit upright on a chair, feet resting flat on the floor.
2. Take three deep sighing breaths (in through the nose and out 'AHHHH' through the mouth).

Nine Cleansing Breaths

1. Breathe in through both nostrils. Notice the fresh clean air entering your body.
2. Press your right index finger into the right side of your nose and breathe out through the left nostril.
3. Do 3 breaths like this.
4. Next, change sides: Breathe in through both nostrils and breathe out through the right nostril, using your left finger to block the left nostril.
5. Do 3 breaths like this.
6. Now, rest your hands on your legs. Continue breathing in and out through both nostrils. Do 3 breaths like this.

Sweeping Out Thoughts

- During the whole sequence, when breathing in, feel that you are inhaling positive health and wellbeing. Each breath refreshes your body and mind.
- Steps 1-3: As you breathe out through the left side feel that you are removing any anger, frustration and stress.
- Steps 4-5: As you breathe out through the right side, feel that you can let go of any greed, need, or possessiveness.
- Step 6: As you breathe out through both sides of the nose give yourself

permission to release self-doubt, or attitudes that no longer serve you.

Side Bends and Shake-outs

Complete the sequence using these seated stretches to physically squeeze and shake any stale air from body. Keep breathing in through both nostrils between each movement. If you are sitting crossed legged then change the cross of the legs to balance your sitting pose.

Side Bends

1. Sit up, resting your hands on the thighs, breathe in then turn at the waist to face your right thigh.
2. Breathe out steadily through the nose, bending toward the right thigh. Imagine releasing any stale air from the bottom of the lungs (like squeezing a tube of toothpaste).
3. Breathe in, returning to the central position facing forward. Turn at the waist slightly to face your left leg.
4. Breathe out steadily, bending toward the left thigh, inhale to come back upright (this is one round).
5. Do this 3 times, alternating left and right.

Shake outs

This can really clear the cobwebs! Imagine a dog shaking from tail to head when getting out of water, but take it more slowly and don't shake your head!

1. Stay seated with your hands on your legs, and breathe in through both nostrils.
2. Breathe out through the mouth with a soft 'HAAA' sound and shake the



body from side to side, from the base of the spine to the shoulders.

3. As you shake and breathe out 'HAAA' lean forward toward towards your legs.
4. Use a deep in-breath to come back to the original sitting position. Repeat 3 times.

End with three sighing breaths and then sit in stillness for a few minutes to observe how you feel. Nothing to achieve or make happen, being with exactly how you are. No judgement.



**"When you own your own breath,
nobody can steal your peace."**

— Author unknown

You can go on to sit in silent meditation if you wish (see Meditation Corner, page 3). You don't have to sit in lotus for this - any comfortable position is fine!

Grateful

Every Day

We all know that “thinking positive” is a good thing. It makes us happier, and more able to be the kindest, most fulfilled version of our selves. Sounds great!

But how do you actually do it?



One way is through practising gratitude - making time each day to think about the good things that have happened and giving thanks for them. This brings our attention naturally to the positive aspects of life, and gets the mind used to looking out for them. These can be big things - like a parole meeting going your way, or news of a new baby in the family - or they could be small, like someone lending you a teabag or smiling at you in the yard. A great way of doing this is writing down three things every day that you're grateful for.

Many of you have shared the things you are grateful for. Here are some examples of what you've said:

- An officer had some banter with me and it broke up a crappy time.
- I spoke to the governor and he said he'd help arrange my transfer.
- Someone knew that I'd had some canteen stuff stolen and he offered to share his chocolates and cake.

Being grateful for positive things does not stop negatives from happening. But it does create room to see both sides of life, and the choice about what we'd like to focus on. Why not try writing down three good things each day for a week and see what happens?

Before going to jail I had a fair deal of experience of conventional exercise (gym work and martial arts) but had always thought that yoga was the domain of weird hippy types, Indians and celebrities in their quest to be “cool”! How wrong was I. I decided to give yoga a try because:

1. It got me out of the sweaty monotony of a prison cell;
2. It was different and an achievable challenge; and
3. One of my mates inside was already in the class.

I enjoyed the challenge and variety of the asanas, the feelings of working little-used muscles and the mind concentration and focus needed to appreciate the requirements.

Our teacher was called Ruth. She was a bubbly and intelligent lady and put everyone at ease by asking how their time between lessons had been and also if anyone wanted to share any concerns of any particular ailments, physical or psychological, or any nagging concerns. Then she tailored her class to suit the needs of everyone present. Some guys, including me, didn't always get the gist of what we were asked to attempt but Ruth was very patient in re-explaining, simplifying when necessary and offering adaptations for anyone struggling. We learnt about nostril breathing, the three-part breath and Ujayii breathing and a whole load of cool stuff.

I felt exhausted after each two hour class which always ended with a solid 15 minutes or so of silent meditation either laying down or seated.

The good effects (can't think of any bad ones) were that I felt energised and relaxed at the same time for several days and nights after the class. I slept more soundly and regularly (before, my sleep pattern had been quite erratic) and I felt calmer and more confident dealing with whatever daily crap jail can throw up.

I had done some meditation previous to being locked up due to my preoccupation with Kung Fu and Buddhism but never any yoga. It enhanced all I had previously been taught in the other two realms.

Totally non-religious yet spiritual, gentle yet pleasantly tiring and physically challenging. Ultimately rewarding – a breath of fresh air.

My life since being released has been a rollercoaster but I have at last reached a good place. A modest council flat, a lovely understanding and beautiful girlfriend, renewed relationships with my wider family, a sweet old hound to look after. I still practise yoga, meditation and my other interests as much as I can and still find comfort and free space in my practice.

If I could say anything at all to my past self it would be – Why were you such a hot-headed idiot and why didn't you find the beauty and peace yoga offers sooner?



Annual Lecture 2016 - Book Now!

Yoga, the Brain and Mental Health: a Scientific and Holistic Perspective

This year, The Prison Phoenix Trust lecture will be presented by Heather Mason, psychotherapist, physiologist, yoga therapist and founder of The Mindful Institute. Heather will examine the evidence of the mental health benefits of yoga and meditation, drawing on her rigorous analysis of scientific literature, her work with clients, yoga teachers and health professionals, and on her experience of using yoga to overcome mental health challenges in her own life. She will also look at the implications – and profound benefits – of yoga and meditation for the well-being of people in prison.

Introducing the evening will be Pete White, founder of Positive Prison? Positive Futures, a peer led Scottish charity which seeks the recognition of people with convictions as citizens. Pete happens to have attended a Prison Phoenix Trust yoga class when he was imprisoned in HMP Saughton (Edinburgh).

The lecture is at Colet House, 151 Talgarth Rd, London W14 9DA on Monday 24th October at 7.30 pm, with refreshments afterwards. If you've been in prison, it's free - otherwise, tickets cost £10 per person. To buy tickets, send a cheque to the Prison Phoenix Trust, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF. Please include the names and e-mail addresses of all in your party. We hope you can come!



Yoga on the Airwaves!

Did you know that you can do a yoga class right in your cell three times a week, without having to send away for anything? For the last year and a half National Prison Radio (NPR) has broadcast *Freedom Inside*, our weekly yoga class, designed specifically with you in mind. If you have a television and are in prison in England or Wales, you should be able to tune in (although a few of these prisons don't yet have access to NPR). The radio station is accessible through your TV. If you can't tune in because you're in a prison in Ireland, Scotland, or Northern Ireland, or in a secure hospital or bail hostel or are out of prison, we've made a CD set (see below and right).

The actor Jeremy Irons lends his soothing voice to the introduction while *Inside Time* editor and former prisoner Erwin James presents the exploratory theme of each episode, drawing inspiration from the voices and letters of practising prisoners. Then one of our yoga teachers leads a 45-minute session, which includes relaxation and meditation.

The show repeats three times per week (Friday – noon; Sunday – 7 am; Sunday – 6 pm) before changing to a new class the next week. There are twelve different classes in total. If you haven't already, why not join us by tuning into National Prison Radio and catching a class? Here's what some of you have written about the show:

From HMP Parc

I'm writing to let you know how much your NPR show helped me when I started taking part in my cell. I'm feeling a lot less anxious, calmer and ten times more positive about my future and my time here at Parc which I'm trying to turn into a positive by doing everything I can to better myself.

I felt a little silly at first striking poses in my cell but after I felt the benefits, it made sense to me! I'm still finding new benefits weekly and can't thank you enough! I'm finding the meditation a little more difficult as I have ADHD and so it's difficult to settle my mind.

Thank you for my new outlook on life and for all you do for prisoners!

From HMP Woodhill

Hi Chaps,
I've been listening to *Freedom Inside* for a little while. I got in prison this January as a well angry, confused person with lots of blocked emotions and tension inside.

I was doing martial arts and tried to meditate before but it gave me control without relaxation. Then I found yoga and your programme on National Prison Radio and I'm transformed. I'm a changed – changing – man now.

From a cell-smashing, kitchen-fighting person to a peaceful relaxed one who can feel more, not just control. And this is important I feel. I've still got a bit of tension inside me but I'm working on it freely and sensibly.

Over a month now I'm starting every day with one hour yoga and I feel the change. My days are better, smiling, joking more. I know more ways to release tension and have more fun than just smashing up everything and ending up in the block. Yoga became a helpful tool – a very helpful one – and more and more it's becoming a lifestyle.

I have some books and have a more or less set routine in the mornings – sun salutations, hip twists, bridge, etc. I'm quite flexible by now and relaxed.

I'd like to ask for your free books and any information that could help me in my yogic journey. I'm very passionate and pushing myself. The more I push the more I enjoy relaxation in my body and mind. I very much welcome help, from easy tips such as wrist twists to the complicated full lotus, which I'm 90% of the way to doing now!

From HMP Doncaster

I did the yoga Sunday session and I felt relaxed and then did my 6.50 p.m. Asr prayer (Muslim meditation – recommended five times a day), very similar; each prayer takes five minutes of repeat prayers. You could say it's like washing pots, something you do every day that relaxes your body to let the brain relax deeply. I am aware Ramadan will be over by the time you receive this letter but the five times a day meditation still continues.

From HMP Wandsworth

Just by chance I tuned into your yoga program and started practising every weekend.

It has transformed my life. Unbelievable. Now, I sleep good, my appetite is good, I'm generally feeling healthy. And amazingly my blood pressure has dropped from 160/80 to 140/80.

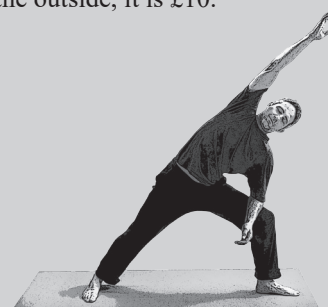
I hope many other prisoners are benefiting from this service.



Using the material from the radio program, we have produced a CD set of yoga classes, also called *Freedom Inside*. This double set features two of our favourite class introductions, two relaxation and meditation sessions, and three physical yoga sessions. All of them are suitable for beginners, and can be done in a small space.

Like on our previous CD, *Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body*, these yoga and meditation practices are designed to lessen pain, promote sleep, and relax the body and mind. Practised regularly, yoga and meditation can work in much deeper ways, helping point the way towards peace and helping us get to know who we truly are.

If you would like a copy of *Freedom Inside*, please write to us at The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF. If you are a prisoner, ex-prisoner or prison staff member, the CD is free. If you're a friend on the outside, it is £10.



**National
Prison Radio**

The Journey Begins

From HMP Lindholme

When my now ex-girlfriend decided that she couldn't cope without me being present in her life the way she was used to, it hit me pretty hard and I started suffering from bad bouts of insomnia. I asked a couple of my friends for relaxation techniques which I tried and then wrote about in the prison magazine that I edited at the time. One of the lads I worked with read the article and encouraged me to start meditating, passing me David Fontana's *Learn to Meditate* to get me started.

Although I didn't really have anyone to guide me, I noticed an instant impact. Just being able to detach myself from my thoughts was a great relief even before I started being able to quieten my mental chatter. When that started to happen I began to build a picture of what makes me tick, understanding how my inner thoughts manifested themselves in my conscious actions.

Strength through practice

Since I started my meditation practice at the end of 2013 there have been a couple of periods during which I have let it lapse. When I think back to how I thought and acted during these periods I realise just how much of an impact my practice has. I am so much more composed and grounded when I meditate every day and, as a result, I feel calmer. I also find that I



The path without end

don't struggle so much with sleep during these times.

Recently I have been struggling with my meditation practice. My mental chatter is, at times, almost impossible to quieten, but I still feel the benefit from it even though that is the case. I will soon have a re-categorisation review to be assessed for open conditions. As you can imagine, this will be a big change after four years so this may be what is affecting my practice.

All I can do is just carry on along "the path without end". I am now finding yoga postures are a great help. Even if I don't get the same insight into myself that I can get through meditation, I can feel the physical benefits from yoga practice. I am

not as fastidious with it as I am with my meditation, although I'd like to be.

In three weeks' time it will be the second anniversary of my Dad's sudden death in a diving accident and I think back to how important my meditation practice was at that time. Losing a loved one at any time must be brutal enough but in prison it is a terrible experience. Not being able to be there for other family members in the way you want to be is so frustrating and prison becomes a lonelier place than it normally is.

Fortunately I was able to fall back on my meditation practice and, looking back, it gives me strength to know that I can get through even the toughest of times.



Our friend Reg Zenshen at HMP Woodhill has designed this year's Christmas card (144 x 103mm). The inside message is from Desmond Tutu - "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." You can see it in colour on our website. To order, send the form to the right with payment to: The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF. If your prison is sending payment for you, you still need to send us the form.

Christmas Card Order Form

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

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

☐ I have requested that my prison send you payment

Sleeping Sound



By Lucy



Getting a decent night's sleep can be hard at times. Noise from your neighbours, stress and worry or a dodgy mattress can make the problem worse. The most common thing people in prison who start yoga say is that after their first yoga session they have a fantastic night's sleep. As you do these poses, concentrate on your breath. Breathe slowly and fully, letting the air flow in and out of you without forcing or hurrying it. Don't push yourself while you work. Just enjoy the stretches and the shapes your body makes as your muscles loosen and prepare for a solid 40 winks.



Happy Cat
breathe in



**Flow between
these 10 times**



Angry Cat
breathe out



Child
10 breaths



Cobbler
5 breaths



Goddess
10 breaths



Knees to Chest
5 breaths



Twists
5 breaths each side



Legs Up Wall
At least 15 breaths



Rest
*Lie like this for at least 5 minutes.
Focus on the feeling of your breath
flowing in and out of you.*

... and when you come to closing your eyes for sleep, try staying tuned into each breath, letting your thoughts just lightly be, and bringing awareness back to your breath. Without much effort, make each out-breath a little longer than your in-breath. Pay attention to your body and any tension you feel, and, especially as you breathe out, gently let go of that tension. Hopefully, sleep will come easily and peacefully. Good night!

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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