

PRISON PHOENIX TRUST

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

www.theppt.org.uk



Newsletter, Spring 2018

BEYOND WORDS



At my Aunt Ann's funeral in January, over 200 people crowded into the church, some straining to hear from side rooms. Her strong, guiding presence in our family had always been obvious, and I knew she'd been active in serving her community.

But I'd never known where her energy to face a long series of major life challenges came from. We never discussed the source of her faith which allowed her to weather so many things which seemed stacked against her. When I last saw her, I was amazed at how well she seemed, given her medical history. I wanted to ask how she did it! But she didn't talk about herself. Instead she talked with satisfaction about her family, and about the men she was helping to get an education in her local jail, and how they inspired her.

A place deep within

Talking with church members at the reception after the service, it became clear that Ann's positive stance towards life and her automatic orientation to serve others had been reinforced by her church. She also apparently poured that faith back into the church. So I started to see where her faith came from.

At the same time, the penny began to drop that the very thing that had slightly frustrated me – her keeping relatively quiet about her faith – had an elegant flip side: her service and commitment

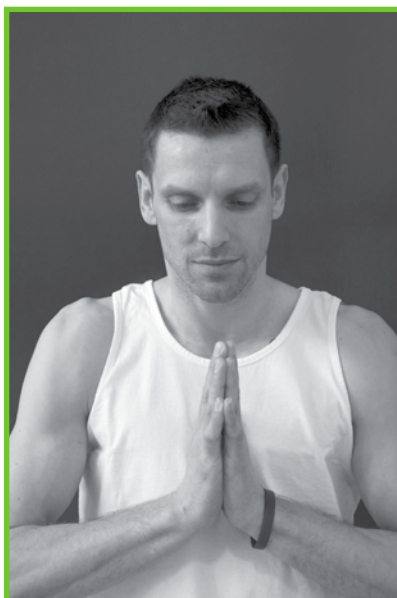
to her family and community spoke far more powerfully because they came from a place deep within her. She trusted this so much that she didn't need to be very vocal about it, or to fall back on dogma or untested beliefs.

The pastor leading the funeral spoke about this quality in Ann, quoting St Francis of Assisi who said, "Preach the gospel at all times, and use words if necessary." In other words, walk your walk, and forget about the talk. (There is no record of St Francis saying this, though the idea is still useful.)

I know Aunt Ann liked to rise early. I don't know what she did in those still hours, but she liked the quiet time alone, before the world got going. In this newsletter you'll read others writing about that still, quiet place that each of us has inside us, even on a noisy wing, even when life feels chock-a-block with troubles. Meditation and yoga are ways of returning to that stillness.

Many people in prison who regularly immerse themselves in inner silence, focussing just on their breathing, letting everything else go, say that when they get up from sitting meditation, they feel ready for whatever comes their way, without a great need to control, or to tell others how it is. In

that stillness and silence, the little self with all its problems and views can take a back seat for a while. What comes forth from that stillness – rather mysteriously – is automatically oriented to serving others and to harmony. It doesn't need to tell everyone its name. And it is the birth right of every single one of us.



Grateful for the silence - a yoga student in a Scottish prison



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.



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

"Almost nothing need be said when you have eyes."

~ Tarjei Vesaas, Norwegian poet and novelist, 1897-1970





From HMP Forest Bank

The book on yoga

you sent with all the pictures of the yoga postures is a big help. Now I go to the gym at 10:30 then I do 30 minutes yoga straight after. I love it so much, I feel like a new person! I find your letters really helpful and you are keeping me positive.

I've now been sentenced - ten years and four months. I was expecting a big one. I've taken it well considering, but my family are upset. It's hard to cope when I hear them cry, but I'm staying focussed and positive. I'll be in open conditions in three years if I'm lucky, so I'm doing everything in my power to help, starting with meditation.

I went to Buddhist group and the guy who runs it is amazing, he made me feel so welcome. We chatted for a few hours then we sat for 30 minutes. I felt so clear in my mind after that. It's mad but that day I met him, positive things started to happen. I moved off D wing (the Bronx lol) to a recovery wing where I have started to reduce my methadone. That is going well so far. My recovery worker is excellent. Soon I should start some courses on drug abuse and offending. I've made a few more positive steps: I've applied to be a listener and also a diversity rep. I'd love to do this as I'm Buddhist so I could soon be a diversity rep for fellow Buddhists.

I just pray I stay here while I come off methadone - I should be 100% clean in four months. I've been allocated to HMP Wymott, which I'm happy with as they have a Therapeutic Community wing, which offers the 12 step programme. This will be great to lower my risk which helps with parole and open conditions.

I'm now managing to sit in meditation every day! It's usually over dinner time when we're banged up and the wing goes quiet for a bit. I read a book for 30 minutes, which helps my focus and gets my body used to sitting still. Then I light an incense stick - sandalwood, my favourite. Then I simply sit on the floor, focussing on my breathing. At the moment I meditate for 30 minutes. Any longer than that and I start to become a little agitated and get random itches. I hope one day I'll be able

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.

to go for 45 minutes and I'll be happy with that. Did you ever feel sometimes that you can't meditate for longer, and how did you overcome this?



It sounds like you're coping well with adjusting to your sentence. Seven to ten years gives you a good space to work on turning your life around and leaving behind addiction and violence, bringing your life in line with your positive Buddhist values. If you can stay positive (which isn't the same as always feeling great) and use all the opportunities you're offered (including any difficult ones, like if you're blocked from doing something you want), this will be a good time to learn and grow and hopefully help others too. We'll be here to support you and help you become free inside.

Reducing your methadone script and doing some courses sounds like a good start. Doing your yoga and meditation is also great. You mentioned that if you try to sit for more than 30 minutes you tend to become agitated. Yes, I do know that feeling. Sometimes I really feel I don't want to or even can't sit anymore. There are two things I'd suggest:

- 1. Don't try to sit for more than 30 minutes without including a five minute period of walking meditation. Hold your right hand in a loose fist shape, cup your left hand round it, hold both hands at the bottom of your breast bone and walk slowly and steadily up and down or around your cell. It's important not to force yourself to sit in the same position for long periods without moving like this, although you keep the same focus on the breath when walking.*
- 2. When you decide how long you're going to sit, make a deal with yourself that if you want to get up before time's up you won't do so the first time you want to - but you will allow yourself to get up the third time. That way you start to develop a bit of discipline, without being too hard on yourself. So say you want to stop 15 minutes into a meditation period you've decided will be 30 minutes. You stay sitting and refocus. Maybe the itches will go away and you'll feel more settled and carry on for the full half hour. But maybe that doesn't happen. If you've given it a good honest try by carrying on sitting twice, then the third time you want to get up you allow yourself to do*

Prisoners'

so without judging yourself.

- Rachel

From Bombat Phiset Prison, Thailand



I have been in jail for six years and eight months. Getting to know my spiritual practices and walking that spiritual way is something that I could have never learned without coming to jail, and you guys have helped me more than you can imagine. Your newsletter somehow always finds its way to me at a time when my spirit needs this fresh wind of reading something about yoga and meditation.

Although I've been doing my spiritual workout every day I still have days where I long for more motivation. Just a month ago I was ill with fever and flu. I couldn't do yoga for nearly two weeks and even meditation was not possible as my nose was running constantly. So I slept through until 6 a.m., when usually I wake up at 4:30. But after I received your letter it was like my flu recovered and I started to sit again. This morning I had a session of yoga again and it was great. I don't think you know how much your letters and words can do.



From HMP Featherstone

Thanks for your Acknowledgement

of my self responsibility acceptance. It is such a huge factor in my rehabilitation process, which I feel is going very well. My life and the lives of my family members will certainly be forever changed for the better by the changes I am currently making.

I practise meditation daily, around 6.30 a.m. for around 30 minutes or until I feel I can't stop my mind from wandering any longer. If I miss practice for any reason then I practise during the lunch time bang-up. I am gradually getting the hang of focussing my mind without it wandering for longer and longer periods. I also practise mindfulness during the day.

Now I have the yoga book and CD, I will incorporate that in my daily routine. I made a commitment to change from the moment I was sentenced and meditation is helping me immensely. I feel that I am becoming a much more centred individual

Letters

with an increasing clarity of the world in general and of life itself. I honestly feel like I am finding a freedom from within and happiness for the first time in a long time.

My partner is struggling with life and the children without me. She has stopped visiting and she sees my imprisonment as me 'leaving her to come in here'. She also resents me for doing well in here, while she is struggling out there. Obviously that causes me distress but the calm focus and clarity I am now able to approach situations with, has enabled me to put things into perspective and understand her turmoil, instead of selfishly taking things to heart and making the situation worse. I am able to recognise her unkind words and actions as nothing more than unloading her stress onto the only person she can and I can support her emotional needs at this most difficult of times. I truly believe that meditation has helped and given me the presence of mind to be able to do that.

It sounds to me like you are also doing



well with 'resilience'—your ability to pick yourself up and bounce back. Meditation really helps this, by bringing us back to the present moment, the only place, anyhow, that we might have any influence to change things for the better.

It must be hard that your partner has not been finding it easy to relate to you. I know when my own wife is upset my tendency is to try to fix her. I think this is probably something a lot of men attempt. There is probably very little we can do to fix others, but if we can find a way to peace in ourselves then this can help others indirectly without patronising them, if only by being able to listen deeply and hear how things are for them.

- The PPT

**From
HMP Lewes**

I've put myself in a routine of doing yoga each morning and before bedtime, for 30 minutes each time. It's soothing and helps me sleep. Plus it keeps me busy as I do not have a TV. I'm not being punished; I simply cannot cope with one due to mental health conditions.



Meditation Corner

The Not-So Sacred Breath

Each week we receive many letters from people struggling to begin a meditation and yoga practice in their cell. How difficult this can be with a cramped room, your cell-mate one side, the toilet, and the telly droning on in the background. It is not exactly the most sacred of spaces, is it? How can we get in touch with something vast and eternal when all around is noise and grot?

Firstly, while it may seem ideal to have a quiet sanctuary, there is no need to find a peaceful place for meditation to work. Just take things exactly as they are at this moment with all the usual activity going on around you. Sit up straight and allow your posture to be attentive but relaxed. Try to sit perfectly still with both feet on the floor and your hands resting on your legs. Raise the chest and tuck the chin in a little.

Start to become aware of your breathing. Notice how the exhalations may be slightly longer than the inhalations. Just breathe normally and recognise how this



By Jason

happens effortlessly of its own accord. Some meditators hold the breath in great esteem and use fancy terms like 'the sacred breath'. Maybe this is true, but we are going to let go of such decoration and make everything plain and ordinary. Just keep breathing, in and out. In and out.

Maybe there is noise echoing from the wings, an officer's radio bleeping, music from another cell, television advertisements, an unpleasant smell from the toilet – the list could be really long! But at this time none of this is particularly sacred – or particularly shabby. Just return to the breath and don't bother making a judgement, or spending any extra time on these things.

If you can spend around 15 minutes with this practice each day, gradually all that comes to your attention will start to feel acceptable. In a world full of vivid news, strong opinions and dramatic

images, perhaps 'acceptable' seems a bit unexciting or passive. But if you consider how much unhappiness you have about things you resist, it might be a profound experience to accept everything that comes your way! Rest assured you have all you need, right where you find yourself.



**"Just keep breathing,
even with all the noise..."**

Spring Cleaning

Alternate Nostril Breathing



By Victoria



Spring is in the air, and as the first signs of new life emerge, this can be a time for clearing out the cobwebs, making changes, starting new projects or learning a new skill. Tidying your room, or starting a new fitness programme can bring a fresh outlook even in the most stressful conditions - making your space feel more harmonious and your body healthier. But is it also possible to spring clean your insides too? To clear out old habits or thought processes that hold you back?

Alternate nostril breathing is like a spring clean for your insides. It uses the breath to balance our internal energy known as Chi in Chinese medicine, or Prana in yoga. It's related to the western concept of bio-rhythms, which describes how our energy switches from periods when we want to do physical activities like working out in the gym, to periods when we feel more like mental tasks like writing a letter, doing a Sudoku or studying.

Alternate nostril breathing will support your meditation and relaxation practices – and your day in general - by balancing these physical and intellectual energies in your body, slowing the heart rate and lowering blood pressure so that you feel calm but focussed. Breathing through the left nostril is said to activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System ('rest and digest') which promotes healing and relaxation. Breathing through the right nostril is said to activate the Sympathetic Nervous System ('fight or flight') which prepares us for physical activity generally, not just in stressful situations.

Caution: Don't try this if you have a cold, bunged up airways, sinus problems or respiratory issues. Be kind to yourself and wait until you're feeling better.

To start, spend a few minutes clearing any clutter in your room and make your bed. If you can, open a window to get some fresh air, if it's not too cold. Blow your nose.



“Behold, my friends, the spring is come; the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love.”

~ Sitting Bull 1831 - 1890, Native American leader

Sit comfortably in a position you can maintain for five or ten minutes. Try sitting on a chair, or the edge of your bed. Keep your back upright and the feet firmly planted on the floor, head and neck in line but relaxed.

HAND POSITION: When you begin, you will use the thumb and ring finger of your right hand to help switch the breathing from left to right side. You'll bring the right hand up to the face and use the pad of your thumb to press gently into the right fleshy part of the nostril and your ring finger to press gently into the left side.



But first, with your hands in your lap, take three sighing breaths. Breathe in through the nose, followed by a gentle sigh (AHHH or HAAA sound) through the mouth.

Now press your right thumb into the right nostril. Breathe in gently and steadily through the left side.

Before you breathe out, switch nostrils, gently pressing the left nostril closed with your ring finger. Breathe out steadily through the right nostril.

Next, breathe in through the right side, and then close off the right nostril with the thumb to breathe out through the left side. This is one round.

Do 5 rounds. Build up to 3 sets of 5 with a rest in between to observe how you feel. Summary: IN LEFT, OUT RIGHT, IN RIGHT and OUT LEFT = 1 round.

Start and finish the exercise on the left side. Keep your breath steady and calm. Try not to over fill the lungs by breathing in too much or empty out too much on the out breath. Move smoothly from in-breath to out-breath on alternating sides without holding the breath. It shouldn't feel laboured or uncomfortable, too fast or too slow.

This exercise can calm your mind before resting or if you're feeling nervous. It is useful preparation for meditation and it's also helpful first thing in the morning before you start your day.

I Am The Person I Want To Be

From HMP Garth

November

I am settling in well in my new surroundings, and it is down to my yoga and meditation practice. I am a lot more at peace with change now than I ever was before. I look at it like this: I can't stop change but I can change how I react to it. I've also come across people here that I know from other prisons four or five years ago. Every one of them have noticed the change in me.

I am finally being the person I want to be. I was stuck in a downward vortex of negativity. I find it hard to explain why or how I changed. All I know is I'm never going back into that vortex.

To answer your question of where my principles come from, I'd say it's a mixture of my own reflections and Biblical teachings. In the gospel of Matthew it says, "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need," which lead me to ask "What are my spiritual needs?" That is when I decided the main four are Peace, Love, Unity and Respect. That led me to think if I'm in need of these, then so are others. At the end of the day we are all human which means we all have the same needs.

It truly saddens me when I see the reports of war, famine, etc. If every human lived by these four simple principles we could see an end to war and human suffering. At the end of the day I know first hand the effects of violence and how it ruins and ends lives. I am a convicted murderer and there's not a day that goes by that I don't wish I could turn back time to put a stop to what I did. It was also the reason I fell into the vortex in the first place. I found it extremely difficult to move on. But through seeking a real relationship with God and opening up spiritually I'm beginning to move on.

Here's a verse I found in Psalms:

"I raise my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come? My help comes from Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth."

To answer your question on feeling God's love forgiving my past, the answer is, "Yes". I feel He's given me a second chance of life, which is the most wonderful feeling I've ever had. I know

I can never undo what I did but I can change my future. I made a promise to Him never to use violence of any form again. And because I meant it 100% I can feel His presence in all I do, which, to me, tells me He will always be there for me in both the good and bad times. It's easy to ask "Where is God?" when you're going through a rough patch, but what about when things are good? That's when we must thank Him. Too many people turn to Him as a "last resort", when in fact He should be our "first, middle and last resort".

Rejoice in the hope

I've made a new friend on my wing. He's a Buddhist so we share a common interest in yoga and meditation. We have started to meditate and practise yoga together. We can spend up to 1 hour 30 minutes in meditation with each other. We also take it in turns to lead one another in yoga. My practice has got stronger since we've been helping each other. It's awesome having a partner to help you. He lived in Thailand for 19 years and his wife is still over there. She sends him books on meditation and yoga on a regular basis. He asked me how I got into my meditation and yoga so I told him it's through the fantastic work of all of you at the Trust. I'm currently reading a book I got off him called *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. I'd definitely recommend it to you or anyone who is seeking spiritual guidance. It's helped me to put things behind me and look forward not back.

I'm going to close with a verse from the Bible (Romans Chapter 12 Verse 12):

"Rejoice in the hope. Endure under tribulation. Persevere in prayer."

December

To answer your question about me not using violence and what helped me, it's hard to explain. I suppose it all boils down to where such actions lead to in the past. It lead to negative consequences. I became an isolated person because people viewed me as someone "not to mess with". So I never developed any friends because to put it bluntly, people



were scared of me.

Now I have a good social group who in turn have a positive effect on my own behaviour. They are aware of my colourful past and help me to not reverse all the hard work I've put in to become more "spiritually driven". Also, if I was to bring harm to another person this would be against God's will. God is a lover of peace therefore so should I be.

My family has booked a visit for 7th January. This will be my first visit in three years so I can't wait to see them. I owe the repair of my relationship with some family members to my new life. That's also a factor to me shunning violence. My family can see genuine change in my morals and ethics. They see I'm putting my past away and making an effort to get out and better myself.

I'm still enjoying my job and I've just started education doing a maths qualification. This is a part of my plan of what I want to do when I get out. I already have my Level 2 Painting and Decorating, Level 2 Business Studies and Level 2 Health & Safety in Construction. I want to start my own painting and decorating firm, so my maths will help me with this. Plus I'm committed to getting as many qualifications as I can. It's all free whilst I am in prison so I may as well take advantage of it.

Peace, Love, Unity and Respect be with you!



Help Us Keep Hitting The Spot!



By Sam

decades, we are looking for 30 friends and supporters on the outside who would like to commit £500 each year (or £42 a month) for the next three years. I know £42 per month is beyond what most of us could consider. It's also true that the PPT's work inspires some to give far more than that. (Whether you've been able to give £5 or significantly more in the past, we are equally grateful.)

We are inviting this kind of support, as raising funds in coming years will be more challenging. This is because one very generous friend is having to reduce their annual contribution. Also, more charities are applying to the grant-making trusts we apply to, although we are still successful with many grant applications. Finally, demand for our work is up!

Yes, there is more yoga and meditation happening than ever before: 176 weekly classes in 91 prisons (and bail hostels and immigration removal centres). Also at a record high is the number of people writing for help starting a practice in their cells: last year 3,485 prisoners asked for our support this way. We have monthly articles in *Inside Time* newspaper, a radio programme on National Prison Radio, and more volunteer letter writers than before.

If you'd like to be one of those 30 people who will set up a regular donation of £42 a month (or any amount you'd like) this year, write or email us (all@theppt.org.uk), mentioning this article and asking for a banker's order form. We'd be delighted if you chose to be involved in this way.



This year, the PPT (Prison Phoenix Trust) turns 30 years old. Even as the charity has developed, our active ingredient - practising inner silence - has stayed the same. Many people in prison say they make time each day to sit still, focussing on their breathing, accepting everything, and let it all go. They say this simple practice hits the spot, allowing them to let go of negative thinking and enabling them to turn difficult situations into opportunities for insight and wonder.

To help us towards seeing another three



Ways To Plug In



By Lucy

Who knows how this newsletter ended up in your hands. Perhaps you picked it up in the library, or we posted it to you along with a book or CD. Maybe you've been getting it for years. Regardless of how it reached you, you may not know about the other ways you can get plugged in to practising meditation and yoga and exploring your spiritual life. So we've put together this list of ways we can help.

Free Books & CDs

Peace Inside

A meditation guide, and an account of prisoners' struggles and successes as they learn to find meaning in their lives and experiences in prison. It draws on letters from people in prison and letter writers at the Trust. People who enjoy reading will get the most from this book.

Becoming Free

A handbook with detailed instructions on starting or maintaining a yoga and meditation practice. This book offers more depth than the next two, and is also for those who enjoy reading.

Freeing the Spirit

An illustrated guide explaining how to set up a daily practice of meditation and yoga, using easy-to-understand language

and light-hearted drawings.

Yoga Without Words

A colourful picture book to help people who cannot read start practising meditation and yoga.

Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body

A 75-minute yoga session on a CD, including postures and movements, relaxation, breathing exercises and meditation.

Freedom Inside

A double CD featuring two shorter yoga sessions with postures, relaxation and meditation, plus a bonus asana track. Introductions feature Prison Phoenix Trust Patrons Erwin James, Jeremy Irons and Benjamin Zephaniah. Best for people who already have the first CD.

Our books and CDs are free for people living or working in prison or former prisoners. Just write to us and ask for the ones you'd like. Others on the outside can buy them from our website.

Classes

While books and CDs are great, a yoga class provides the chance to work with a teacher who can help you challenge yourself, and find ways of doing things to suit you and your body. Many people say their yoga class is one of the few places

where they can fully relax, find some peace from the pressure of prison life, and find within themselves a useful way of looking at things. If there's not yet a class in your prison, and you'd like to help us start one, get in touch.



Letter Writing

We reply to all the letters we receive from prisoners. Our letters back and forth are partly about empowering people to keep going with meditation and yoga. It's encouraging to be in touch with someone who is himself practising too! And the fact that we are all -- inside prison and out -- often at sea with life's challenges is a big part of why we offer to stay in touch with people inside. Our letter writers don't claim to have any answers, but we can listen, share our experiences and offer encouragement for the positive things you are discovering.

The Journey, Not The Destination

From HMP Manchester

My sleep is much better now thanks to corpse pose, meditating, and the hints to aid sleep which you sent.

You asked a poignant question about my insights into spirituality. A lot of my awareness came 14 years ago at HMP Lancaster Castle. I was in an AA/NA rehab based on 12 steps recovery, spiritual principles and the original AA book. We also meditated at least morning and night and had specific meditation classes. During one I had an out of body experience. My spirit went above my body and a forty minute meditation felt like less than a minute.

This was also where I discovered yoga. We had two classes each week that I thoroughly enjoyed. After release I found myself a little support from an AA rehab, attending regular AA meetings and daily meditation.

I dabbled with religion and a bit of meditating as well as reading books; one of my favourites is *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, which helps me stay in the moment.

The biggest and greatest aid to my life is consistent and continued meditation. It has not only slowed my mind down but slowed me down, making me realise what is important in life. With the ever-clearing mind, reading the Bible, as well as talking to like-minded people, I am gifted “pennies from heaven” – insights into aspects of life I never knew existed.

I have gone through my life lacking common sense, now I’m gifted bucketfuls. It is now a joy to help others, to be loving, caring, patient, kind, tolerant and humble – the list goes on. This has brought me to a decision in my life. I’m nurturing these qualities and want to do some form of charity work upon release. When I have been here for six months I can apply



to become a listener – something I look forward to.

Life is so much easier and worth living with a free mind! Says the man who has journeyed from a busy motorway to that of a tranquil country road, who desires to enjoy the simple things in life and help others. All through simple meditation, prayer and yoga.

Meditation works

Don’t get me wrong, there are many dark times, but it’s simply a matter of falling to my knees, asking God to help and to take myself out of self pity i.e. the ego! Then meditation works. With the practices I’ve done, I’m soon back on track. I consider it part of the journey.

I have many phrases written on my cell wall: “It’s the journey, not the destination” and “No snowflake falls in the wrong place”. I am here for a reason, so I have to make the most of my time

here, continuing my own journey, which also encompasses carrying the universal message to others.

Corinthians is my favourite book in the Bible, although only Jesus could possibly live that way. It is something positive to strive for, and to quietly remind ourselves of, should we take a step backwards in our practice.

My practice massively increases my awareness of my traits and habits and rather than me pushing away from people, I’m drawn to them, mystically knowing how to tread carefully – seeing, experiencing or having myself previously experienced what they’re going through, I can empathise, and try to help. The best results come from simply giving them a little time over a brew.



Fantastiskt!* More research on prison yoga - this time from Sweden

This newsletter is filled with individual stories that attest to the power of yoga and meditation to help bring positive change to people’s lives. If you’re looking for more scientific evidence, there’s plenty of that around too, specifically for yoga in prison. Research in Sweden, published last autumn in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, built on the positive research by Oxford University into prison yoga. The Swedish research showed that prisoners doing yoga had less stress, better sleep, and increased psychological and emotional well-being. They also did better on computerised tests that measure attention and impulse control. A link to the paper can be found on our website. Stort tack** to the wonderful people who did this work!

*Amazing, and **huge thanks, in Swedish



Back In Action



By Brent

I've had lower back pain recently and doing these exercises each day has really helped. Even if your back is fine, they are still good to do. Try them and see how they feel. You'll need something to lift your hips and lower back about four inches off the ground for posture number 7.

1. Take a big deep breath in through the nose – and sigh out through the mouth. Do this twice more.



Raise your arms to a height that suits you and sway side to side for one minute, going only as deep as is comfortable.



3.

Turn slowly to the side and hold for 5 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



4.

Hold each of these positions for 5 full breaths. Repeat on the other side.



5.

This stretch can be intense, so bend your knees if needed.

6.



Come down and rest briefly, taking 3 breaths.

7.



Position a blanket or pillow or whatever you are using somewhere under your hips where it feels most comfortable. Let your outstretched leg feel heavy. If it feels okay, stay for 3 minutes each side. You can also do this on your bed.

8.



Relax completely as you hold your knees. Stay for 1 minute.

9.



To finish, take 3 more sighs. Now let your attention stay with your natural breathing, letting your whole body relax and be easy. Stay for 5 – 10 minutes. Use a blanket if it's cold.

**“It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves,
and it is not possible to find it elsewhere.”**

~ Agnes Repplier, American essayist, 1855 - 1950

This newsletter goes to prisoners and prison staff, and to our many friends who continue to offer us their encouragement. We receive no statutory funding, and are completely reliant on supporters who understand the value of meditation and yoga, silence and the breath in empowering individuals and society to heal. Two important ways that friends can help are remembering us in their will and setting up a regular donation. Any support you can offer is greatly appreciated.

Prison Phoenix Trust Newsletter
PO Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF
registered charity no. 1163558

