

Back to nature



Welcome.

All around us the leaves on the trees slowly and gradually soften and change during the Autumn days. When they are ready the leaves drop away. Whilst the trunk at the core stays strong and always there. Even during times when it is more hidden from view.

In the letters and notes we receive each day, many of you would like help with your anxiety, stress and how to relax. On these pages we have yoga poses to help release this tension in your mind and body. And turn to the back page for guidance on how to relax. It looks simple but is one of the hardest poses.

We can all struggle to relax and let go, to let leaves drop away, and to be aware of our inner world. Meditation and yoga really can help. Autumn reminds us that when we are ready, we too can let go. *Continued page 4.*

Clive writes

"at least now I have the tools to bring that erratic mood-pendulum to a state of rest."

You will read in the Letters the different ways some of our readers are able to find moments of peace and a sense of transformation.

Find out how yoga and meditation helps with the darkness and some heart-felt experiences from other peers too. It means a lot to us to be able to share these and our first ever DVDs with you: *Time Out Inside*, see page 3.

Love from us all

Selina, Chris, Hannah, Mike, Padmakumara, Victoria and all our volunteers

The Prison Phoenix Trust supports prisoners in their spiritual lives through meditation, yoga, silence and the breath. It recommends breath-focused 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, DVDs, newsletters, free taster workshops and weekly classes.

See inside:

Free DVD

Time Out Inside
Yoga and
meditation toolkit
Page 3



Release tension

Yoga poses to settle anxiety
Page 6



Learning to relax

A simple way to connect with your body
Page 8

Letters

Letters are published with permission. Thank you to those kindly sharing their experiences to help others.

From HMP Dartmoor

When doing my morning sun salute, I have started looking forward to the peaceful meditation afterwards. Recently, I have been able to sit comfortably. I now open my eyes after about 20 minutes, as you suggested, to take in my surroundings.



Last weekend I did a yoga session and finished with the 'tree balance' (one leg stand). I know it sounds a little dangerous, but I can stand on my chair, which means I can see out of my window **it really is a lovely feeling, just absorbing the view, the trees, and the everchanging colours of the fields, hills and moors, not to mention the clouds and sky.**

I have also started 'sitting' in the evening, after supper when the wing goes quiet. Half an hour sitting comfortably on my back, no stress, no pressure, I just let it be. Afterwards I definitely feel a sense of relaxation and at peace with the world. Cannot be bad! I am definitely feeling better in myself at the moment.

From HMP Bristol

The 52 Challenge inspired me to do a structured routine. I do my yoga now at a regular time of 6pm now. So I don't make any excuses as it was a bit ad hoc before.

My meditation is slowly improving which I practise after each yoga session, with no time limit. I've noticed they are gradually getting longer time but to me they seem shorter mentally.

I've just built a yoga block from card and bits which helps a lot to stop me slouching.

From HMP Haverigg

I also took up yoga and meditation classes for time out of my cell, but found they have allowed me to connect to my real self; rather than any conditioned public persona. I am not the same person as I was in 2019, for sure. It is amazing how transformative yoga and meditation are.

I was in a very dark place last weekend. Full of absolute dread (of what, I am not sure) and self-loathing and doubt. For 3 days, I spent my time either walking, or on my mat, or stool, just breathing and trying not to dwell on any of the negative thoughts going around my head. It was the 'simple breath' that brought me through to Monday. I am sure that will not be the last time that happens, but at least now I have the tools to bring that erratic mood-pendulum to a state of rest. It is like most things, when things get too 'extreme' it is never good: just aim to keep everything in the middle and all will be.



From HMP Ashfield

Meditating and the letting go of thoughts does help at the time and for a short to medium time afterwards. So I can focus on other things. But the thoughts always come back until I deal with them – by doing something to solve the situation – write a letter/complaint, talk to someone etc. but generally it does help for a consistent 2-3 hours of head space to focus on other positives. That is what I am noticing recently anyway. Focussing on the breath helps clear my mind as I am not focussing on my thoughts or what is going on around me. So that does help make me focus on what I am doing.

I assume 'deep inner silence' is a period of calm and peacefulness. When I practise meditation, I do find this happens. The thoughts leave as we said previously, they do return, but I say words to the effect of 'go away' and return to the calm and peacefulness. And I can focus on what seems like a clear space. I close my eyes and feel like nothing and no one else is around at all. Generally, in the evening there is no noise to disturb this, so it genuinely feels like no one else exists and everything is calm.



From HMP Northumberland

What are all the things that sustain me, whilst people are giving up hope and enable me to cope with the thoughts? Where do I get my strength to endure the '***'? and how I have turned all of these negative into positives? How I now put everything to prayer, and got the 'gift' to study in full time education and succeed at doing so? Simple answer is because of encouragement to practice the art of meditation.

I now meditate on everything in my life and it works! It really does work. The anxieties, worries, everything seems to flow away.

When I sit in silence, I hear God calling me to him. Hard to understand, I know, I could not believe it at first.

Because of this, I stay sane, and yes the *** still happens, but I can now self-manage what the world throws my way!

Now, I delight in it all, my life is 100% better because of the encouraging letters to not give up on this art and practice.

From HMP Wealston

The Sufi timetable is 5 times a day. Each time we pray/meditate we say a supplication and do movements to every verse, so throughout the day we do 100 repetitions where we bow down and touch floor our forehead. We aid digestion with the bending. We also rotate head right to left to keep the neck supple.

In fact it is like we are doing yoga. Combined with meditation. This preserves prayer. As we wash before each prayer it helps keeps your body clean.

If you would like help to read the newsletter, ask a member of staff about Shannon Trust.



TIME OUT inside 1

Yoga and meditation toolkit: Get Started

Order your free DVD here. Guided breathing, yoga movement, relaxation and meditation.

The DVD comes to you with hope and love. All you need is your body and your breath. Suitable for beginners and those with experience.

When we share yoga classes with you, many say how it is the first time they have been able to feel more settled and want to commit to spending their time positively.

Enjoy! We are happy to share these with you.

Order your DVD

(exclusively for those living and working in secure establishments)

Please send me my TIME OUT Inside 1. DVD

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or staff role _____

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Back to nature



Artwork - HMP Greenock

Continued from page 1. I wonder if you were surprised to read how the relaxation on the back page is one of the hardest yoga poses. It looks simple. It takes time and regular practice to notice where we are holding tension and to cultivate the subtle awareness and confidence to allow that to drop away as we also let go of our breath. This may be the physical tension in our bodies we have created to protect us, a form of defence, or an image of ourselves.

When we spend time in stillness, we may notice that (page 3) **'the anxieties, worries, everything seems to flow away.'** This may happen by regularly practising relaxation or meditation or other yoga poses. The release from mental and physical states like anxiety, stress and the cycle of worry, starts to happen naturally. This takes time, patience and regular commitment so don't worry if you don't notice this straight away.

We may also notice our mind feels clearer, less cluttered by all the thoughts and worries. Our writer at HMP Ashfield writes about this (page 2) and how he has times of deep inner silence. Coming back to our tree analogy, the leaves are like our inner noise and changing, reactive parts of ourselves. At the core is the tree truck. Solid, grounded and unchanging. Like our own deep inner stillness that is there all along, once we allow the leaves to drop away.

The trunk is like our true selves that is often hidden from view, by the image we put out to the world. Writing from HMP Haverigg (page 2) says how he initially took up yoga and meditation classes to get some time outside of his cell and then noticed how it enabled him 'to connect to my real self; rather than any conditioned public persona. I am not the same person I was in 2019, for sure.'

Many others also come to see themselves quite differently.

A writer shares how he has been able to absorb the view of Dartmoor from his window. Noticing 'the ever-changing colours of the fields, hills and moors, not to mention the clouds and the sky.' Like nature, **WE are also shifting with time**. Our true selves at our core, like the trunk of a tree, always there. With recovery and healing we may start to be more familiar with this part of ourselves.

Allow it to reveal itself slowly.

Like the gradual changing landscape of Autumn.

Give it time.



Selina

Editor

Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips

How to get started

1. All you need is your body and your breath
(Your blanket and pillow may help)
2. Pick one yoga pose you like on page 6 or 7
Or try the relaxation on the back page
3. You don't need to be perfect
4. Do it again tomorrow and the next day
If you miss a day, just try again the next
5. Start to notice a time each day you can stick to
6. Write to The Prison Phoenix Trust for guidance

You might like to tune into The Prison Phoenix Trust's yoga and meditation programme, Freedom Inside, on National Prison Radio, 3 times a week.

National
Prison Radio

"I began with some favourite positions for a while that led gradually and naturally into longer sessions.

"I've also started joining in with the Sunday morning practice on National Prison Radio, which has been a good source of encouragement and is now a regular fixture in my weekends.

"I now feel I'm back in the joyful routine of regular practice."

Angela

Let it go, with the flow

by Victoria

This harmonises mind and body to help reduce anxiety and release stress.

Move between 4 Downward dog, 5 Plank and 6 Home pose extended, several times.

The rhythmic movements here and moving with your breath in 8 Bridge and 10 Seated side stretch help to release agitation in your body and mind.

By coordinating your breath with your body movements, it may help lift your mood from intrusive thinking to a space of rest, calm and clarity.

1



Mountain

Notice your feet on the mat
x 5 breaths.

2



Stretch and sigh

Breathe in reaching up,
sigh out lowering arms
x 5 breaths.

3



Rag doll

Relaxed forward bend
x 5 breaths.

4



Downward dog

From all fours, lift hips up
and back
x 3 breaths here then flow.

5



Plank

From Dog, breathe in, move
shoulders over wrists into
Plank, breathe out return to
Downward Dog.
Repeat x 5.

6



Home pose extended

Rest x 5 breaths
Repeat 4 to 6 up to 3 rounds.

"Accept what is.

Let go of what was and
have faith in what will be."

Sonia Ricotti, author

Tips

- Notice your natural steady breath.
- Try to move with it as you flow with the poses.
- In Bridge pose push down with your feet to lift your hips.
- Between movement come back to the feeling of your body standing, sitting or lying.
- No mat or carpet. Try the sitting and lying down parts on your mattress.

7



Knee to chest

Stretch right leg along floor, hug left knee to chest x 5 breaths. Repeat other side.

8



Moving bridge

Gradually lift the hips and lower back from the floor on the in-breath. Lower gently back to the floor on the out-breath x 5 breaths.

9



Coil pose

Hug knees to chest x 5 breaths.

10



Seated side stretch

Cross-leg. Alternate between right and left sides x 5.

11



Seated twist

Swap the cross of your legs x 5 breaths each side. See caution box.

12



Legs up rest

Lie on your back with lower legs supported on a chair seat or the edge of your bed. Make sure you are warm and comfortable. Rest like this for 50 breaths. Notice the contact of your body to the different surfaces for a few breaths.

Cautions

- Be careful not to slip.
- Modify or miss out poses that may cause injury or pain.
- Engage your core in Plank to protect your back.
- Seated twist 11 is not suitable for back problems.

Relax and rest

by Selina

- Release tension
- Feel less agitated
- Heal

Breathe through your nose, if you can
Feel your breath in and out

1. Breathe in curl your toes
Breathe out relax your feet
and let go
Breathe in tense your legs
Breath out let go

2. Breathe in squeeze
your core
Breathe out relax

3. Breathe in expand your chest
Breathe out release anxiety

4. Breathe in draw shoulders
back, tense arms and
hands
Breathe out release

5. Breathe in clench your
teeth, frown
Breathe out relax your
jaw and face

6. Breathe in tense whole
body
Breathe out let tension
melt away

Keep breathing gently for about 10 minutes.
Let go of focus and effort.

When you are ready, Flex your fingers and toes.

Stretch and roll over on to your side.

To ease your back place a
rolled up blanket or pillow
under your knees

“Have patience with all
things, but first of all
with yourself.”

Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop

Regular readers may notice the way this newsletter looks is also evolving. At The Prison Phoenix Trust's core we remain the same, like the trunk of a tree. But on the outside we are also shifting with the seasons of time and adapting in response to your needs. Let us know how you get on with these practices and what you think of our fresh look. Take it slowly and gently.



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www.theppt.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1163558

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.