



Bring nature in



Practising yoga this morning I noticed how refreshing it was. Yoga and meditation can be a spring clean, brightening our body and mind. We can all get dragged down by gloom and darkness, especially during the winter months. No matter what is going on - outside influences or inside our minds - we can take a cleansing breath.

By bringing attention to our breath, during breathing practices, like the one on the back page, or practising yoga or meditation, we refresh and clean our bodies and minds. Many of you write and tell us this. You will read about some experiences in these pages. We can take inspiration from our writer on page 2 to make time to look up at the sky, to breathe in the sense of space. The writer notices how doing yoga helps them feel like their spirit is flying free too.

Watching nature unfold with the seasons brings many of you a sense of joy, space and freedom. It seems to reflect the opening of your heart. Making meditation or yoga practice a part of life starts to open up the wonder of nature. It all starts with paying attention to breathing.

Dee writes

“I’m taking a moment to gaze outside, witnessing nature unfold, the trees changing colour”

All day every day we are breathing. Just like our hearts are beating and our food is digesting, we do not notice it. When we start to take notice of our breath, this is when it can influence us positively. Even when we might feel very stuck where we are, we are all changing with each breath, letting go of the past and moving forward.

Continue reading on page 5.

Love from us all

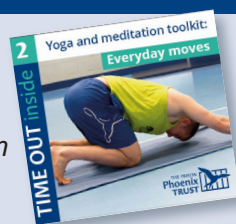
Selina, Chris, Hannah, Padmakumara, Victoria and all our volunteers

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 2
Yoga and Meditation Toolkit
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Create your healing space

Yoga poses to help you find peace

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Breathing to calm down

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Letters

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

From HMP Dartmoor

Working as Peaceful Solutions mentor has given me purpose, a sense of self-worth, being part of a team and contributing. Listening to other prisoners' problems, worries, concerns, fears etc can be hard at times. Some tragic life stories are hard to hear. They stick in your mind. This is where **a little meditation to clear the decks** is really helpful. Just letting go of my stuff and theirs is a powerful self-healing tool. I've yet to get the hang of it completely of course. I think this may take a lifetime of practice.

From HMP Rye Hill

I feel all the important things to consider, is that through the learning techniques of yoga, **calm, peace and tranquility, are found within oneself**. Learning to live with yourself and all God has created alongside of us is, through yoga, the way to achieve a prayerful practice.

From HMP Garth

I got what you were saying about being able to just sit in meditation whatever is going on. Whatever the inner voice is saying and the stresses of the day. It has taken really focussing on making my practice consistent and making it part of my daily routine to begin to achieve that sense of being able to let negative thoughts and feelings wash over me. I cannot imagine life without meditation now. I feel much more balanced, more stable and able to cope better. That is a consequence of having those **30 minutes of calm twice a day where my mind has a chance to settle and refocus** in productive and positive ways.

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



From formerly HMP Stafford

I have been using every opportunity to relax through stillness and freedom. The air I am breathing is fresher. I am taking things slow and steady. I do not want to be rushing into things and being impatient.

Being out has made me appreciate the real purpose in life is to live. I feel an immense sense of renewal. Almost as if I am definitely the person I was destined to be. For those people inside that are feeling low, I can only tell them that hope is a wonderful belief to have, and anything is possible even when you have stigma attached to you.

Remember that your crime is only a small part of who you are. We can all learn from mistakes. None of us are perfect, but we can all learn from mistakes and make the best of chances and opportunities that are available to us all.

Take advice as and when you can. Second chances are rare but they are possible to obtain if you hold on to self-belief and determination. I would encourage anyone to use any educational materials they can get their hands on and throw yourself into learning.

For those of you in prison, I can understand first-hand how offences can be seen as a barrier to progression and how you will re-emerge in society, if you utilise all the help and support that is available to you, then anything is possible. The journey isn't going to be all sunshine and rainbows, but **the real strength in us humans is that we can conjure up resilience, determination, and genuine belief**.

Remember we can move away from those mistakes once we have learnt from them.

Keep hope in mind, be true to who you really are because it's never too late to be who you might have been. Time heals, nothing is ever as bad as it may seem. Stay safe, stay positive and take the opportunities and support available to you.

From HMP Lowdham Grange

April

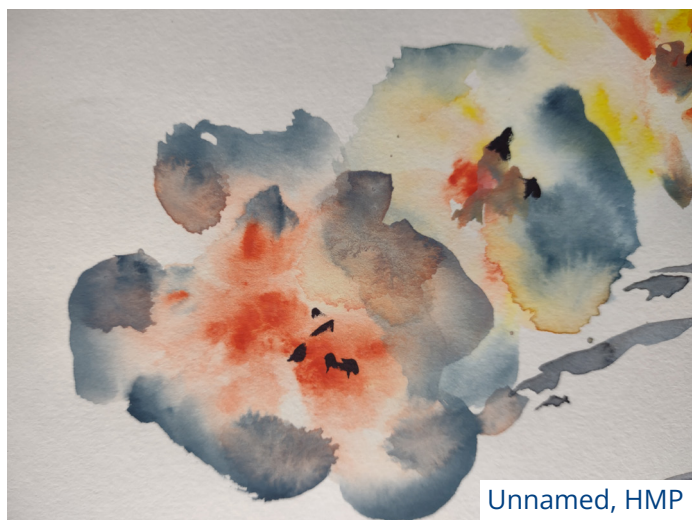
I read on page 21 in the book *Freeing the Spirit* about how to 'bring nature to your cell', to make your own sacred space. Next time I spot a leaf, or a twig I shall bring it back to my cell.

I am lucky enough to have a window which opens. My view isn't so bad either. I often look out and stare at the sky. Right now the sky is bright and clear. I often see planes quite a distance away.

When I do yoga it makes me feel like my spirit is flying free like them too! God bless you and all the imprisoned souls in the establishment and also all the forgotten people inside and out.

May

I found my precious object just sitting there on the floor. Now I use a pigeon feather which I have coated in glue to make it less fragile. I wrote before about enjoying looking into the atmosphere, watching the world go by.



Unnamed, HMP

You might like to tune into The Prison Phoenix Trust's yoga and meditation programme, *Freedom Inside*, on National Prison Radio, Every Friday at 3pm Every Sunday at 8am and 5pm

National
Prison Radio



TIME OUT inside 2

Yoga and meditation toolkit: Everyday moves

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 2

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

or staff role _____

Prison _____

Wing _____

Date of birth _____

☐ Please put me on the newsletter mailing list



Artwork - HMP Dartmoor

***May the sun bring you
new energy by day.
May the moon softly restore you
by night.
May the rain
wash away your worries.
May the breeze blow
new strength
into your being.
May you walk gently
through the world
and
know its beauty
all the days of
your life.***

Apache Blessing

World Meditation Day 21st May 2023

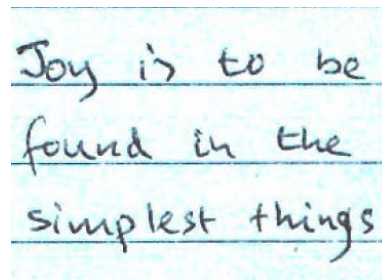
Join us in a day of silent meditation. In memory of Sister Elaine, who passed away late last year. Sister Elaine joined The PPT in 1993 as our first Director. She co-authored our popular books - Becoming Free and Freeing the Spirit. We hold her in our hearts, along with all the people whose lives she touched.



From HMP Barlinnie

The word cell has a few different meanings. In this context the most appropriate is a 'small room for a prisoner, monk or nun'. However, the 2nd definition in the dictionary is the 'smallest unit of a living thing'. I really like this 2nd definition as there is a nod towards the community aspect of prison life. In both definitions there is an emphasis on size and there is a subtle suggestion of separation. The point about separation is odd. Sure I'm locked in there and can only see one other person, but I can hear lots. My loneliness is odd. I live in very close proximity to 1300 (maybe) people. Intensely lonely and yet there's no privacy. No space for individuality yet all our journeys are different.

I have appreciation of your letters as mail allows me an ounce of me as an individual. A reminder that I don't need to feel lonely all the time. I feel me rather than my prisoner number. I managed an hour of breath-focused meditation every morning this week 5.30-6.30am. I enjoy sitting meditation too. I sometimes add a cup of tea to it! Examining the now more carefully and completely.



Artwork - HMP Haverigg

From HMP Whatton

Meditation is my way of acknowledging and taking power away from my negative thoughts. The more I practise, the more I can acknowledge negative thoughts, park them, and then re-establish the peace that meditation brings to me. It is the greatest gift.

Bring nature in

Continued from page 1

The seasons are a reminder that our situations are constantly changing too. Practising meditation and yoga can help us see how we have choices on how we have choices to influence our future.

A writer shares how 'life isn't over, life is just taking us on a wave, but we all have some influence about where that wave is taking us.'

As I write this we are still in winter. A frost this morning froze every leaf and twig. The birds are sheltering. There is a feeling of deep quiet. Then as the sun came out, everything began to soften and melt.

Our hearts, minds and bodies can feel frozen like this too. Stuck in time. As we start to regularly practise meditation and yoga, just like the frost, our hearts, minds and bodies also begin to soften. With the softening we start to notice and allow nature in.

Just like how a writer (page 2) finds meditation helps them clear the decks' when tragic stories stick in their mind, there are signs of spring emerging outside and for each one of us.



Selina

Editor

Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips

Being still with anger

1. Take time each day to be aware of the feeling of your breathing.
2. The Body Breath Mind practice, on the back page, will help calm you.
3. Throughout the day 'take a breath' to keep checking in.
4. Notice what being angry feels like for you. Do you grit your teeth or clench your fists, or something else? Recognise it.
5. Breathe long breaths out. Imagine your breath going down to the ground.
6. Keep breathing out the anger and do some yoga to help it pass through. Try out the sequence on the next page.
7. Regular meditation can help let difficult thoughts come and go without dwelling on them.

Create your healing space

by Victoria

This grounding practice can help if things feel uncertain, or if you just want to step away, take a break and reconnect to your natural peaceful state. This state of steady strength is always within you.

Making space - Breathe in between each movement from 1a to 1d. Repeat the sequence 3 to 5 times.

Heart warrior - Move between 3a and 3b, hold position for 5 long steady breaths. Swap sides and repeat.

1



Making space

Breathe in and rest your hands gently on your upper body. Breathe in between each movement from 1a to 1d.

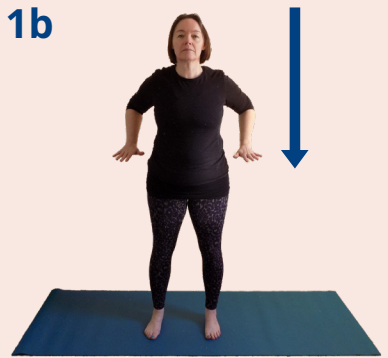
1a



Making space

Breathe out, hands move up - make space above you.

1b



Making space

Breathe out, hands press downward - create a space.

3a



Heart warrior

Breathe in, step one leg forward. Bring your hands to your heart space.

3b



Heart warrior

Breathe out, bend your knee*. Arms open with elbows bent.

4a



Grounding breath

Breathe in, palm up, lift your hand to shoulder level.

“See how nature - trees, flowers, grass - grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.”

Mother Teresa, Catholic Nun

Tips

- Choose a place where you feel comfortable and have space to reach in all directions.
- In postures 1 and 2 you might like to explore the idea of expanding your comfort zone.
- *For Heart Warrior check your knee is aligned above your ankle to protect the joint.
- Between movements come back to notice your feet on the floor.
- You can try these movements sitting or standing, adapt them to your needs.

1c



Making space

Breathe out, hands extend sideways - make space left and right.

1d



Making space

Breathe out, hands press forward - create space ahead and behind.

2



Side stretch

Breathe in, raise your right arm. Breathe out, side bent to the left. Pose for x 5 breaths. Repeat on the left side.

4b



Grounding breath

Breathe out, palm down, lower it back to your leg.

5



Rest

Find a comfortable position in your chair or lying down. Use cushions or blankets if helpful. Rest for a few minutes eyes open or closed.

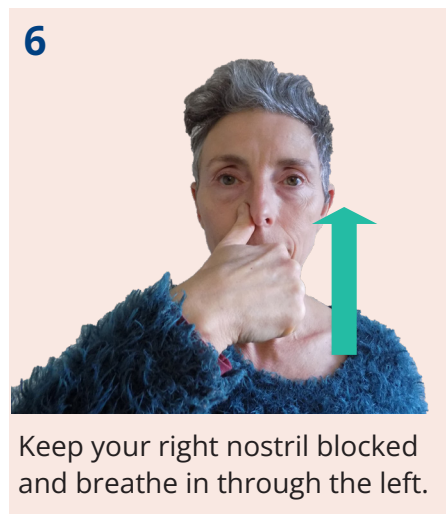
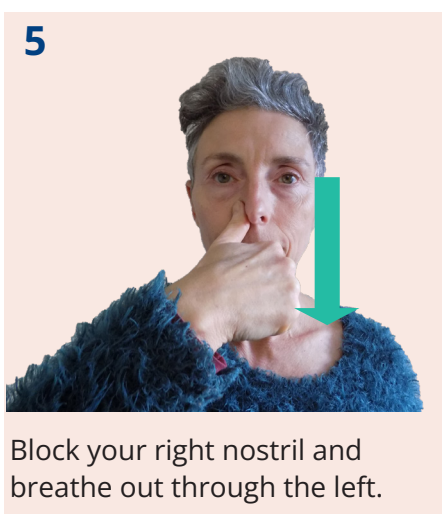
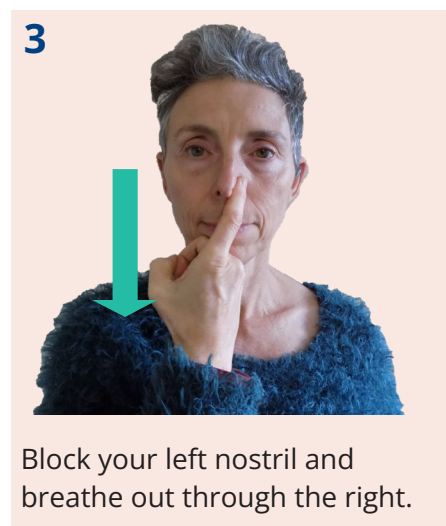
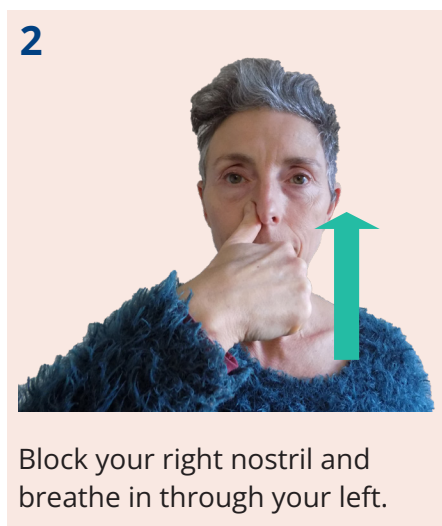
Cautions

- You are in charge, listen to your body as you move and breathe.
- You can choose to modify or opt out of the exercises at any time.
- If possible, practise on a non-slip surface or barefoot.
- Stop any breathing exercise if it feels uncomfortable. Breathe at your own pace.

Breathing to calm down

by Chris

This breathing exercise will help calm an agitated mind. Once you have completed one round, repeat steps 2-6 and keep going for up to 3 to 5 minutes if it feels good.



Tips

- Blow your nose before you start
- Sit on a chair or edge of bed to be upright and comfortable
- Breathe softly
- Let the in and out breaths be equal in length

Cautions

- Do not do this after a heavy meal
- If it does not feel good, stop!
- Always start and finish breathing in and out through the left nostril



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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.