

Sunshine within



As the daylight hours lift spirits and energy this summer, it is a good time to reflect on inner light. Take some time to think about where your light shines. Practising meditation and yoga, many notice how, out of the quietness, energy comes. They want to help others, or feel the urge to express themselves in art, poetry or song.

Before we stand up from our meditation we can make a decision to take our practice into the rest of our day. Paul writes on page 2 how he notices he thinks more clearly and a writer from HMP Hull sets an intention to be a light in the darkness, burning brightly to guide others.

Some people recognising their inner light choose to follow a particular faith. Equally many are not set on what that is or what they believe. The practices we encourage are supportive of all faiths and also equally helpful to those who choose not to follow a faith. Everyone's life can shine. As I write this, we are emerging from a time of deep reflection. Ramadan for Muslims, Lent for Christians, the Sikh festival, Vaisakhi and others. The hardship of fasting deepens compassion for others in difficulty. Those suffering have been especially held in our hearts and minds during this time.

Paul, who has now been out of prison for some time, talked to us recently about how he had dark times in prison when he was giving up and his yoga teacher and our letter writers helped him when he was in despair and 'wasn't feeling it'. For weeks he did not practise. With encouragement that it was still there within him, he found the strength to wake up in the night, roll out his mat and practise.

Continue reading on page 5.

Paul says

**"The breath,
more than
anything,
carried me
through."**

Love from us all

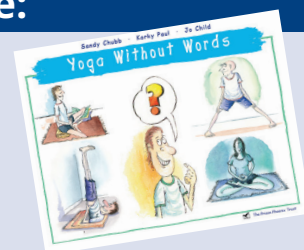
*Selina, Chris, Georgia, Hannah, Lou, Padmakumara, Victoria
and all our volunteers*

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 book

Yoga Without Words
Page 3



Ready to shine

Yoga poses to help
build strength
and balance

Page 6



Rectangle breathing

For positive quietness

Page 8

Letters

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

From HMP Lewes

It's great to have someone to speak to about meditation and yoga. I meditate every day for around 15-30 minutes and yoga for 30 minutes to 1 hour a day. On a Thursday when one of your colleagues comes and teaches I may do 2 hours. The benefits are too numerous to write but when I fail to practise for any reason I notice a huge difference. As for the anxiety and sleep issue, I have both, as I likely have PTSD. I have found the breathing practice very beneficial.

From HMP Berwyn

I believe meditation helps me reach a place in my mind that is calm and allows me to think clearly afterwards. It also helps me with energy and sleep. I always feel vibrant and glow when my energy is in my control.

From HMP Hull

There is no point in worrying about the possible outcomes, but keeping them in mind and accepting them. I fully intend on keeping up my various practices and getting the relevant qualifications in both yoga and iRest so that I can provide it as service upon release. My practice will definitely be what I turn to when things become difficult. One of my inner resources is that *'I am a light within the darkness that will never go out, burning brightly so as to guide others on their journey.'* It's important to have a heartfelt mission, an intention and an inner resource. I am constantly helping everyone in everyway possible in here, just like on the outside.

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



From HMP Altcourse

March

I have been having a profound experience of late and a real connection to God, which is odd considering the circumstances. Before my mum dying I would have put money on me falling to bits but I have believed more than ever and God has bombarded me with signs and in doing so has spoken loud and clear to me that my life has to go in a different direction from before. When I saved my former cell-mates' life, my key worker went the extra mile to get me a special study Bible. I read it every day. I don't have to take anti-depressants anymore.

April

Buddhists are definitely onto something real and beautiful, full of love and peace. As a follower of Jesus I know for sure Jesus loves all who are of that disposition. I have been regularly meditating since I received the Peace Inside book and even in such a short time I have noticed such great benefits. I am doing 15-20 minutes every time I sit at the moment, I then go into my prayer routine which is about 20 minutes. Wow, meditating on the breath alone first is definitely a great thing. My mind tends to wander from the breath but I'm persisting. My memory and ability to memorise has doubled. I've memorised a pretty long morning prayer routine.

My great loss made me really search and seek and knock and have most definitely found and been given. My behaviour, my outlook, my thinking, my decision making, outlook on life, on people, just everything is getting better every day. Gradually but profoundly so.

I suffered depression and anxiety before I came here. Now I do not. I deal with things so much better. I do not do things my way anymore. I trust in the Holy Spirit and as meditation teaches I try to let go of my ego. My thinking is calmer, more focused and directed and clear. I do not dwell as much or worry. I am still early in but the changes are profound and so dramatic.

Life on release

Thinking about my journey and how I got involved in meditation, I came to the conclusion that it was The PPT literature that I applied for whilst I was serving a prison sentence in 2003, that was the seed that was planted in my mind, although some seeds take a while to germinate and grow.

I am not implying that I have been meditating consistently since then. My journey has been rocky and arduous, involving trauma, drugs and drink abuse and many prison sentences, but each and every time I came back to prison I returned to the breath, and health and fitness. As I have become older I have been able to address my issues and have become more stable mentally and now see life differently.

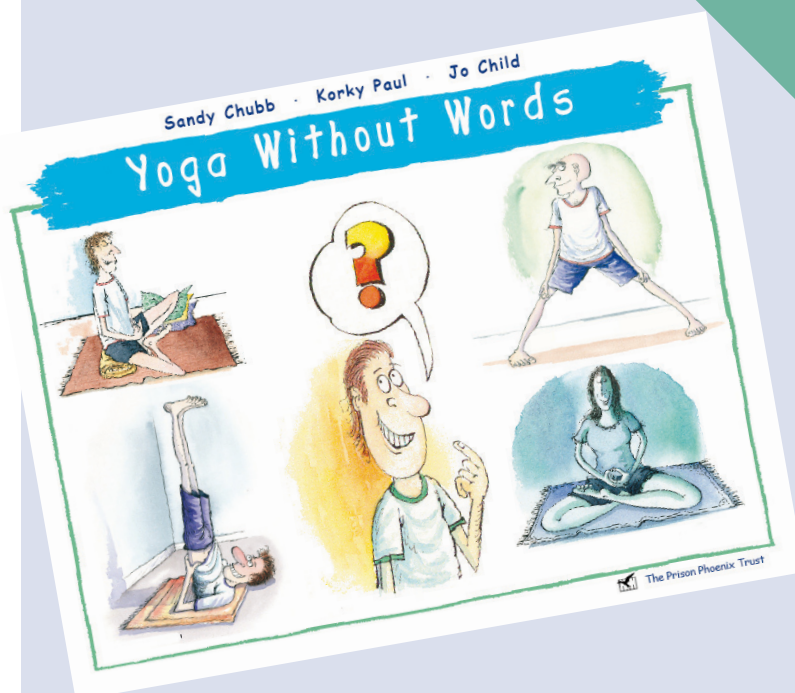
I have recently managed to build up a meditation practise consistently for several months now and am working on trying to incorporate fitness and yoga into my life, but I am appreciating the small steps. I do not drink and take drugs now and I am more accepting of just going with the flow of life, although sometimes the road is rocky for me with regards to my mental health I feel I have found salvation each and every day when I practise. I would like to help a person, just like myself, who was looking for something better.

“Out beyond ideas of right doing and wrongdoing there is a field. I’ll meet you there.”

Rumi, Poet, Sufi Muslim



Unnamed, HMP



Yoga Without Words

An illustrated guide with pictures and few words. Yoga Without Words is aimed at people who prefer pictures to words.

Order your free book here.

Order your book

(exclusively for those living and working in secure establishments)

Please send me my copy of Yoga Without Words

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

or staff role _____

Prison _____

Wing _____

Date of birth _____

☐ Please put me on the newsletter mailing list

Yoga 30 Challenge

Inspired by his time learning and teaching yoga and meditation while in prison, Paul is raising money for The Prison Phoenix Trust by embarking on training to do a 30-minute headstand.



See our
tips on
page 5!

Join Paul and others all around the country inside and outside prison with your own 30-minute challenge on 13-15 October. **Please do not do a headstand** - as this is an advanced posture that is dangerous to do without many years of training. Instead you could do:

- 30 minutes of meditation
- 30 minutes of your favourite yoga poses
- 30 minutes of sun salutation
- 30 minutes of silent walking

Tell us what 30 minute challenge you will be doing

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

Address or prison _____

Email (if available) _____

30 minute activity _____

If people would like to sponsor you, they can make a donation through our Just Giving page.

To find out how to donate you can contact us:
**The PPT, PO Box 328,
Oxford, OX2 7HF**

Freeing the Spirit

A song written on release, inspired by words in these newsletters.

First it wasn't easy
The darkness and the gloom!
Filled my heart and mind.
There wasn't any room!

Now my spirit's soaring
I can breathe so easily
There's a deep quiet feeling
That's running now, through me!

Our hearts, minds and bodies,
Though frozen, stuck in time!
Can all be set free.
Meditation can unbind!

Repeat all verses



“The end of one thing opens the door for the beginning of another”

From HMP High Down

From Royal Edinburgh Hospital

I managed to do some prolonged meditation in my room. 5 minutes and felt the better for it. I find that when you do meditation and apply yourself to it, nothing else matters that much and you live your life in a different way.

I enjoyed the *Top Tips: Being Still with Anger* (Spring 2023 newsletter). I am doing what I can to overcome my anger. I try to anchor my anger and stay in wise mind.

I practise *Breathing to Calm Down* (alternate nostril breathing) in my room, my sanctuary. I've just done one round only and instantly I am reaping the benefits. I feel calmer and chilled out.

Sunshine within

Continued from page 1

Butterflies are around again. Each one having emerged from a cocoon of darkness. Take a moment to think what that is like for you.

A writer from HMP Rochester feels grateful for all that comes before him. That can be hard, but many of you write and let us know that despite the environment and hardship, you are feeling different and dealing with things better. Helped by dedication and commitment to your breath practice – and the hope to keep going.

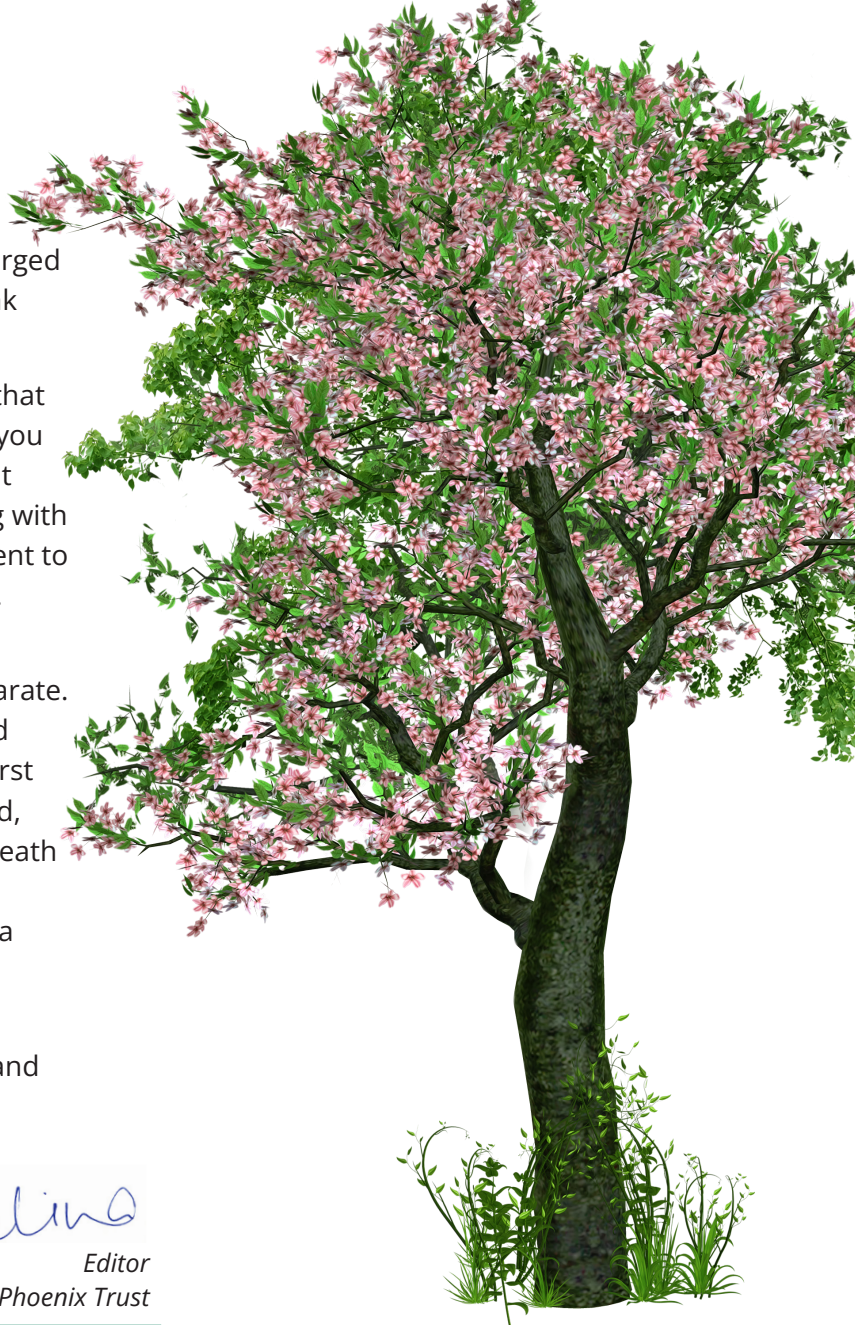
When we feel down and troubled we can feel very isolated and create barriers to keep ourselves separate. Going into that cocoon. Believing there is hope and gaining energy from others' encouragement, is a first step to practise. Try the techniques we recommend, like the yoga sequence on pages 6 and 7, or the breath practice on the back page. If you are just getting started, send us your details for our free book *Yoga Without Words* on page 3.

Allowing your own experiences to emerge in their unique ways is a great gift, waiting to be received and shine through the darkness to give hope and joy.



Editor

Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust



Top Tips

How to build your practice

1. Set your intention of what you would like to do. Be clear and realistic.
2. Build up slowly and gradually. Start with 1 minute and add a minute each week.
3. Keep practising until you are ready to slowly lengthen the time. Allow time to strengthen and prepare your body.
4. Build up time in meditation by counting each breath. If difficult thoughts or feelings overwhelm, bring your attention to the ground and your surroundings and take a break.
5. Or choose to do 1 or 5 minutes for 30 days. You decide what is right for you.
6. Do not do anything that causes pain or distress. That is the most important tip. Please do not do a headstand. It takes years of training with a teacher to do this safely.
7. Write to The Prison Phoenix Trust for guidance or talk to your yoga teacher.

***"Gain strength
from our
community
practising
together,
wherever we
are"***

The combination of standing postures and floor work in this sequence can build strength, balance and resilience. Try it in the morning to uplift your energy and help you focus.

1



Hip circles

Feet wider than hip width, with normal breaths. Rotate each direction 5 times.

2



Horse rider

Breathe out into a mid-squat. Take 3 to 5 breaths.

3



Extended mountain

Breathe in to stand, extend arms overhead, bring hands together.

7



Tiger stretch

On hands and knees, reach right arm forward and left leg behind. Take 3 to 5 breaths. Release and repeat alternative limbs.

8



Walk the dog

From hands and knees lift hips back into down dog. Bend alternate knees, walking on spot. Hold for 3 to 5 breaths.

9



Table top

Separate feet hip wide, knees bent. Place your hands behind. Breathe in, lift hips. Take 3 to 5 breaths.

Tips

- Alternate between Horse Rider and Extended Mountain poses repeating 5 times to warm up and create a flowing movement.
- Tiger Stretch - for extra comfort, use a folded towel or extra padding under your knees.
- Use a towel as shown in Double Angle Pose and Seated Forward Bend for greater comfort in your shoulders and spine.

Cautions

- To protect your joints, keep your knees above your ankle in Horse Rider and Stretched Flank poses.
- Double Angle Pose is not suitable for hypertension/heart problems. Try Half Forward Bend, hands rest on upper legs.
- Table Top is not helpful for wrist and shoulder injuries.

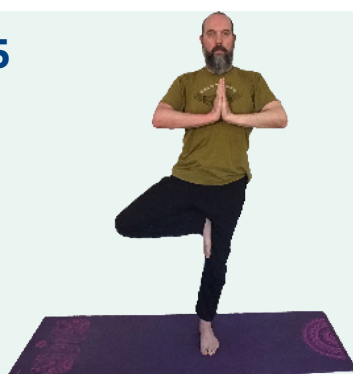
4



Stretched flank

Lower body in warrior stance, rest forearm on thigh, extend other arm overhead. Do this for 5 breaths on right and left side.

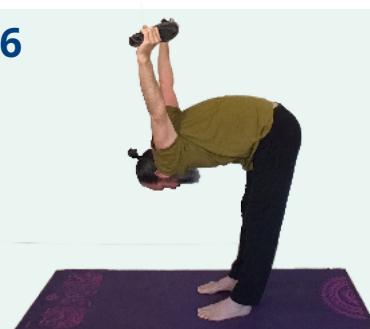
5



Tree balance

Ground through the right leg, place left foot on right leg. Hands together for 5 breaths. Repeat on left side.

6



Double angle pose

Feet hip width, breathe out to fold forward. Breathe in to extend arms back and up. Take 3 to 5 breaths. Release arms and come to floor

10



Seated forward bend

Breathe out, soften upper body toward your legs. Take 3 to 5 breaths.

11



Seated twist

Sit with legs crossed. Breathing out, turn to the left. Take 3 to 5 breaths. Repeat on right side.

12



Resting pose

Rest on your back, for 30 to 50 breaths. Eyes open or closed.

“The yoga keeps me moving when locked up for long periods”

From HMP Channings Wood
Published in Inside Time

For more of our yoga sequences, look out for our articles in Inside Time newspaper!

insidetime
the National Newspaper for Prisoners & Detainees

Rectangle breathing

by Lou

This breathing technique can help promote feelings of calm in the mind and ease tension in the body for positive quietness.

BEGIN by noticing the ground underneath you. Take 3 deeper breaths, in through your nose, and breath out through your mouth (making a soft 'haa' sound like a sigh).

1. BREATHE IN softly through your nose, let your belly fill (count to 3)

2. HOLD BREATH IN keeping your shoulders relaxed (count to 2)

3. BREATHE OUT slowly through your nose, let your belly soften (count to 3)

4. HOLD BREATH OUT keep body relaxed (count to 2)

END by taking a rest breath. Breath in through your nose and 'sigh' out through your mouth again. Repeat as often as feels right for you.

Cautions

- Do not hold your breath if you have high blood pressure, a heart condition, glaucoma, PTSD, or you are pregnant.
- Stop and rest if you feel short of breath, light-headed, dizzy, or anxious at any point.
- Do not try breathing exercises if you are feeling unwell or have a blocked nose.

Tips

- If possible breathe IN through your nose. Breathe OUT through your nose, or mouth if preferred.
- Try and keep your body relaxed throughout, especially shoulders, face, and lower jaw.
- This can be done sitting down, standing up - anywhere you notice a rectangular shape to follow/trace with your eyes, or you can close your eyes and imagine the rectangle shape.



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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. We have recently received funds in memory of: David Wayte.