



Clear Skies



From HMP Dartmoor:

**'yoga set
me free and
has totally
transformed
my life'**

See page 2

Welcome

We are shifting between bright hot sunny days, dark clouds, torrential rain, and storms as I write to you. It can be a roller-coaster! But no matter what the weather is doing outside, you can read our letters section to find out how some of you are noticing the mental fog lifting or feeling lighter and brighter with regular yoga or meditation practice. When you are able to see things more clearly, you can plan your path ahead based on clearer decisions, and the weight of life may ease.

Getting to a better place, clear of head fog, is possible for all of us. To get there we need to find a way out of the parts of life that bog us down. Life experiences, bombarding us with challenges, can be overwhelming and exhausting. With no clear place to think, we might enter "survival mode" just to get through each day.

But we can reset. Quiet time, steady movement to the rhythm of our breath with yoga, and being aware of our breathing in meditation can all help us to press the pause button. Try the sequence on pages 6 and 7 either first thing in the morning or before you go to sleep at night, or even in the middle of the night if you feel restless. Keep going every day. It might seem like a leap of faith but be encouraged by others who have been kind and courageous enough to share their experiences.

Continue reading on page 4

Love from us all

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

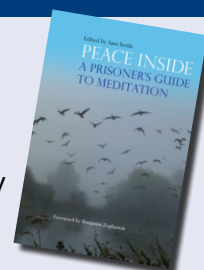
The Prison Phoenix Trust supports prisoners in their spiritual lives through meditation, yoga, silence, and the breath. It recommends breath-focused stretches and meditation sensitively tailored to students' needs. This safe practice offers students ultimate peace of mind. The PPT encourages prisoners and prison staff through correspondence, books, CDs, DVDs, newsletters, free taster workshops, and weekly classes.

See inside:

Free book!

Peace Inside

A guide to your
meditation journey
Page 3



Yoga in Your Room

Yoga poses to help you relax
Page 6



On Steady Ground

Simple poses to help you feel
stable
Page 8

Letters

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

From HMP Rochester

I still do not know what I am (religion), but what I am is okay with me. Thank goodness (or whoever I need or should thank, or the universe I guess) my single cell gives me space to roll out the yoga mat. Just – 89cm x 1.8m space between my bed and desk. I am making use of every inch.

My daily routine consists of 30 minutes meditation, 30 minutes yoga/qi-going or Wim Hof breath. Yoga I do 10 or so deep breaths in each sun salutation posture, then a series of qi-gong rotations then sun salutation with one single long breath each posture. I feel excellent. Hopefully I will get to teach some Ashtanga yoga. Things are going well. *Yoga and meditation have kept me on a good path. I am responsible for my happiness.* I am grateful to be experiencing all that comes before me.

From HMP Dartmoor

Before discovering my true self I was broken and living in misery. No two ways about it, meditation and yoga set me free and has totally transformed my life. So I now want to help others do the same. My lived experience is proof that those who seek a better life will find it. Just look at where I was when I first contacted the PPT. I was in segregation in one of the country's most secure prisons. Now I am in a C-Cat prison, enhanced and I have not had an adjudication since 2018. It is crazy! LOL!



From HMP Eastwood Park

I am doing 30 minutes of yoga every day in my cell. It is very relaxing and keeps me in a calm mood and I am actually really enjoying it. I feel so light and refreshed. Starting my day the right way.

Life After Release

Yoga teaching brought support to the most fearful, grim and desperate times a person can be faced with.

It took me a while to pluck up the courage to attend the weekly evening class at HMP Bronzefield. I had never lacked courage before, but it had been taken from me, along with all my other positive character traits by an abuser.

My NHS mental health team encouraged me to attend the weekly class, eventually, I took up the challenge.

Our yoga teacher spoke to our group in a gentle, kind voice that came from her heart, which gave her tone a strength and honesty. She spoke as if she knew what I had been through and how I was feeling, because at that time I really did not understand. She never asked me about my situation, she did not need to, she just knew. Each session I would be holding back tears, as her truth cleansed and helped relieve the pain.

My physical strength had also been much diminished, this came as a shock to me, as I had always been active and sporty. I wobbled, I fell off the mat, many times, my limbs shaking with the effort of holding my bony frame. My muscles had started to seize up, so even just lifting my arms became difficult. *She took time to give me some exercises to help. I still do them today.*

I have been back home for two and half years now. I am still trying to find the person I was and am still a work in progress. The world sees me as “all okay”, but the damage that has been inflicted cannot be seen.

It is good to read of others who are getting positive results from yoga. I keep all the pictorial movement pages and often practise to the CD.

From HMP Stafford

I have been practising every day, morning and evening, and the brain fog, as I call it, has slowly cleared, over the weeks, to the point, where *my meditation is now a wonderfully peaceful time which I always look forward to. I have also started to realise the positive effects this is having throughout the day.*

After passing on to my family the wonders of what yoga and meditation are doing for me, I have been informed that two of them have joined yoga groups. Hopefully they will also experience what yoga has done for me.

Their poem:

Fog Now Gone

My mind destroyed,
the moment that,
the door on me was shut.

A feeling of,
despair and gloom,
deep within my gut.

Head full of fog,
no room to think,
and struggles day to day,

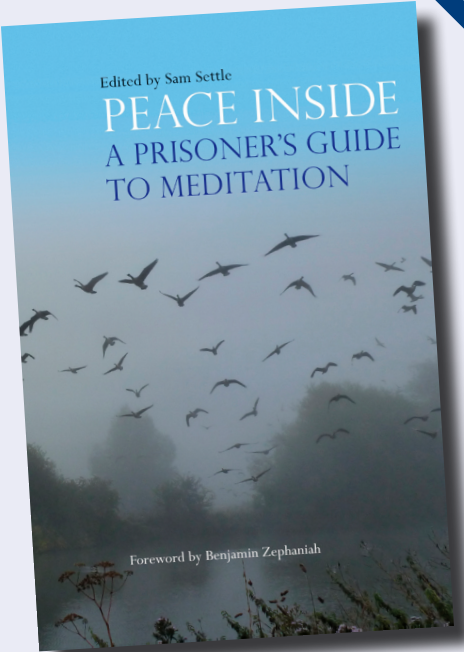
Then 3 months in,
the Phoenix Trust,
sent some books my way.

Although at first,
I did not know,
what this would do for me,

The meditation,
you have taught,
has set my mind to free.

The fog now gone,
my mind can think,
and life I now can bear,

So thank you all,
at Phoenix Trust
it's nice to know, you care.



FREE BOOK

An in-depth guide to your journey through meditation:

Order your free book here. Guidance on breathing, relaxation, and clearing your own head fog can be found inside.

The book comes to you with hope and love. All you need is your body and your breath. A longer read suitable for beginners and those with experience of meditating.

Enjoy! We are happy to share these with you.

Order your book

(exclusively for those living and working in secure establishments)

Please send me a copy of *Peace Inside*.

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

or staff role _____

HMP/Establishment _____

Wing _____

Date of birth _____

☐ I want to receive a newsletter every 3 months

Festive cards



A pack of 10 cards

A mix of designs by Reg for The Prison Phoenix Trust. Packs cost £6, including postage.

Order your festive cards here

Please send me _____ packs of cards at £6 a pack.

I enclose £ _____ payable to The Prison Phoenix Trust.

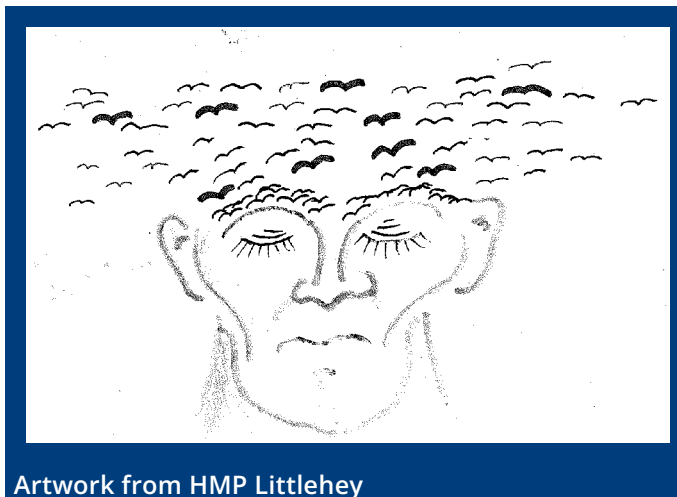
Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Return to: The Prison Phoenix Trust
PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF

Please contact us if you would like to pay by bank transfer



Artwork from HMP Littlehey

From HMP Liverpool

Whilst serving an IPP I found the book, *Freeing the Spirit*, useful for peace of mind. I am also learning about how yoga is highly praised in Hinduism.

From HMP Rye Hill

My hourly workout combines yoga and aerobics! I have adapted it, over 50 odd years, you can understand the essence behind keeping my mind and body, supple! I find I am routinely relaxed, as I accept myself and my responsibilities in life and in family feelings! Whether my practise of these respond within my peaceful presence, or whether it is a combination of all 3, my faith resounds in a restful reserve, in old age!!

Here is my 10 minute routine, which I do 6 times an hour, 2 or 3 times, a day:

50 cats; 50 dips; on a hard bed: 20 x 2 leg stretches; 20, on each of the 7 Crocodile Twists, before which, I have done 200 "crunchies"; finishing off with neck and facial stretches!

Now, that may sound exhausting, but, in my relaxed state of mind, I do not even sweat, or have an overly increased, pulse rate!

Therefore, my equanimity is equalled out in maintaining such an equilibrium! Certainly my sunshine within!

Clear Skies

(continued from page 1)

The letters that you sent reminded me of a song about the hope and courage needed to overcome difficulty: I can see clearly now the rain is gone by Johnny Nash. Many who first get in touch with us, or come to yoga classes, are often in a dark place.

Paul spoke to us about how he had to adapt and change in prison. How he was blocked up inside as he could not show his feelings or reveal how he felt to his family, as they were already suffering so much. By writing to us at The PPT, he was able to communicate the hurt that was going on inside. He started regularly practising yoga and encouraging others. Join him in our Yoga 30 Challenge by doing 30 minutes of yoga or meditation every day in October.

The sequences in this newsletter will help you to feel grounded and centred, whatever the weather outside or inside your mind. They may take us in a new direction, sowing the seeds of forward life and letting go of set ideas about ourselves. We, like the writer on page 2, might be surprised where that takes us.

Good luck everyone in our Yoga 30 challenge! We are rooting for you!

Wishing you all hope and courage for clearer skies.



Selina

Editor

Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips

For difficult feelings

Memories and feelings may come to the surface when we practise.

1. Keep breathing slow and steady.
2. Feel the solid ground with feet or hands.
3. Be aware of surroundings. Here and now.
4. If overwhelming or unbearable, stop practising and walk around.
5. Practise gently. Slowly do more. Stop whenever you need to.
6. Ask for support when you need it. You can speak to a Listener, your chaplain or someone in healthcare.

I Can see Clearly Now by Johnny Nash

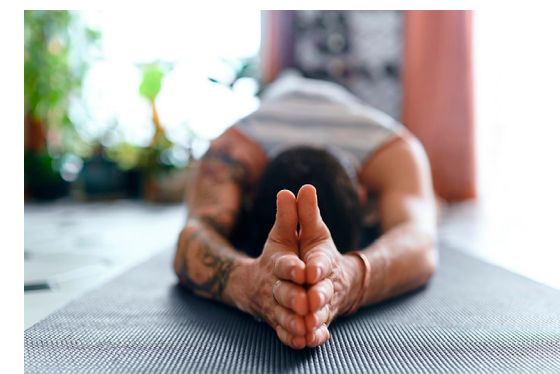
*I can see clearly now the rain is gone
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day
It's gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day
Oh, yes I can make it now the pain is gone
All of the bad feelings have disappeared
Here is that rainbow I've been praying for
It's gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day*

Yoga in Your Room

by Chris

This sequence eases our bodies and minds in a gentle way. Try it when you first wake up or last thing before you go to bed. It can be done in a small space, using just the floor, bed or a chair. You do not need a yoga mat, but you could put a blanket underneath you for softness.

Every day is a new beginning. Take a deep breath, smile, and start again.
Janet Bell, artist



1

Lie down
Lie with knees bent and feet apart. Take 5 slow, steady breaths.

2

Knees side to side
Let knees drop to one side, back through centre and over to the other side. Repeat x 5.

3

Hug knees in
Bring both knees in towards the chest.

4

Circles knees
Draw circles with knees together. Repeat x 5 in each direction.

5

Hug 1 knee
Draw knee in towards chest and stretch other leg out.

Tips

- Put a folded blanket or thin pillow under your head to ease your neck
- Let eyes be open or closed
- In each position, take 5 long slow steady breaths, noticing it flow in and out

6

Circle foot
With knee still hugged in, wiggle your toes and then draw circles with your foot for 5 breaths.

7

Cross ankle
Cross right ankle onto left knee with left foot on floor. Take 5 slow, steady breaths.

8

Thread the needle
If comfortable, draw left leg in towards chest. Take 5 breaths. Repeat steps 5-8 with your other leg.

9

Stretch out and hug in
Stretch both legs and arms above head, making yourself long – then hug knees in, making yourself small. Repeat x 5.

10

Rest
With arms by your sides, now it is a chance to let go and relax any feelings of tension in your body or mind.

Cautions

- Go gently – do not force
- Move within pain-free range
- If something hurts, ease off

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



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.



On Steady Ground

by Victoria

- **Feel centred**
- **Connect to inner strength**
- **Anchor emotions and find calm**

Standing or Seated



1. **Stand or sit up tall** and **scrunch your toes**, then relax them x 5
2. **Eyes open or closed**
3. **Breathe in** slowly and steadily
4. **Breathe out** down to the belly
5. **Relax shoulders** x 5 breaths
6. **Arms relaxed, hands rest softly** x 5 breaths
7. **Notice your body lowering into your chair**
8. **Feel strong and steady in your legs** x 5 breaths
9. **Feel your feet firmly planted on the ground** x 5 breaths



Cautions

- Breathe naturally
- Stop and rest if you feel short of breath, dizzy, anxious or unwell at any point

A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches for the sky.

Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize winner



P.O. Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF
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 Peter McGivern and Derek Sawyer.