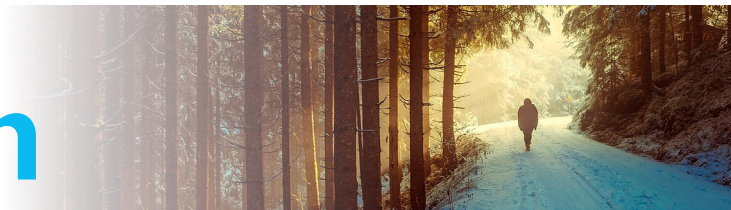


A New Path



From HMP Littlehey

'I cannot wait to see what else yoga can offer me.'

Welcome

Many write about how surprising it is that practising yoga and meditation have given them a new sense of direction and purpose. They talk about how life inside is chaotic and difficult, both the physical environment and a sense of a 'tangled mind'. But somehow, yoga and meditation have brought more stillness, a clearer focus, and direction.

We are not surprised, as it helps us keep practising too! We are inspired by the dedication you show and your willingness to encourage others by sharing what has been helpful. A person from HMP Stafford (page 2) says he gets an immense sense of well-being from sharing what he has learnt and how it begins to disentangle something that had been tangling up for years.

Another person, from HMP Whatton, would like to help others with meditation as he has been in their shoes. He offers words of encouragement to pick yourself up and brush off bad habits by starting meditation with 5 minutes a day. It can help to clear your mind and you may notice a big change in yourself (read more on page 2).

By spending time with ourselves in yoga postures or noticing our breathing in meditation, we start to find out more about ourselves. 'Each meditation is unique and opens up so many ideas, paths and possibilities', writes a person from HMP Brixton. We just have to stick with it and see what happens.

Continue reading on page 5

Love from us all

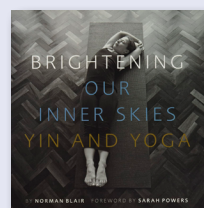
Selina, Chris, Lou, Padmakumara, Sebastian, Victoria and all our volunteers

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

See inside:

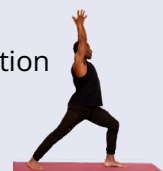
Brighter Skies

Learn about "Yin Yoga" in this book
Page 3



Inner Strength

Postures for determination
Page 6



Letting Go

Finding the "Middle Way" between comfort and challenge
Back Page



Letters

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

From HMP Stafford

I started engaging with The PPT initially via the radio show (see bottom of page 3) at the start of my sentence. Now I am near the end – I am due for release in 14 weeks, but I hope I can use what I have learnt about yoga and meditation for the rest of my life, wherever I may reside.

I am lucky enough to work in the gym as a Functional Skills outreach mentor – teaching English and Maths to willing mentees in the scarce, snatched moments between weight lifting and cardio circuits – so I get to exercise a lot and have had the opportunity to run some informal yoga sessions with curious others.

Leading a yoga session is incredible, and I get an immense sense of wellbeing from sharing what I have learnt. It feels really important and special in a pretty indescribable way. I think it may be because yoga has had a profound impact on my experience of prison and how I feel in my body. It goes beyond a series of stretches or breathing exercises, and as I practise it begins to disentangle something that had been tangling up for many years.

I practise fairly regularly, but not yet consistently, which is a source of some frustration for me. I hope to develop a regular daily practice in the near future, whether that manifests before or after I go through the gate.

From HMP Highpoint

I am one of the lucky ones who has a yoga mat and have a daily practice which really helps me to find the stillness and clear direction needed to navigate daily prison life which can be challenging at times.

I have found peace through yoga and feel the benefits in all areas of my life, finding peace and healing through practice.



Artwork by Paul, formerly at HMP Liverpool

From HMP Brixton

My journey has been amazing, incredibly hard but amazing. Finding out so much about myself and who I really am is surreal. My yoga and meditation has helped me more than I could have imagined. Each meditation is unique and opens up so many ideas, paths and possibilities.

From HMP Whatton

I would like to help out other prisoners with meditation as it helps free the mind when locked up in a prison cell. I have been in their shoes and meditation helps to keep that anger under control and to see life behind bars in a better way. They will also help other prisoners when they come in.

Do not let things get you down. Pick yourself up and show that you are the better person by brushing off the bad habits. For meditation start off 5 mins a day then after a week, if you feel up to it, you can go to 10 mins a day. Then 15 mins a day to clear your mind and then you will notice some thing: a big change in yourself for the better. Keep going. Then you will be able to do a lot that you thought you could not do. You will master yourself and keep doing the meditation.

From HMP Littlehey

I have been practising yoga for roughly 2 months now. I have noticed my digestion and rate of my metabolism have improved. In addition to eating healthily, my levels of stress have lowered and I have found myself dealing with frustration a lot better.

I never would have thought that just doing yoga could have improved all of that but I am glad it has, so I am even more glad I started doing it.

I cannot wait to see what else yoga can offer me. I want to expand my knowledge on yoga to practise on my own and possibly teach others on my wing.

From onward life

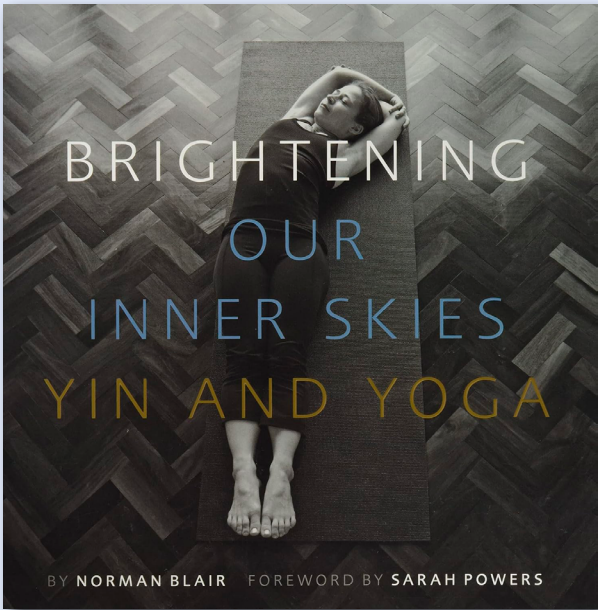
It has been a long tough road, but that desire to change, to make something good in your life can be achieved. Any support that is out there, take it.

You can become really rich in your life – it is not about financial wealth. It is rich in your heart and in your life, it has got quality. When you are all right, when your heart is in balance, not the beating heart but when your central heart that's your soul is right and in alignment, everything is fine and nothing has changed. But when you are out of balance nothing is OK and nothing has changed. Keeping that balance it's like being on a tightrope walker and once you've got the hang of the tightrope, you're fine.

from National Prison Radio Interview

Tune into The Prison Phoenix Trust's yoga and meditation programme:

Freedom Inside
Friday 3pm
Sunday at 8am and 5pm



Brightening our Inner Skies

A reflection of Norman's personal journey through yoga and its bridge to meditation. Clear instructions on single yoga postures.

Only available with this season's newsletter.

Order your **FREE** book
(exclusively for those living and working in secure establishments)

Please send me my copy of *Brightening our Inner Skies: Yin and Yoga*

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

or staff role _____

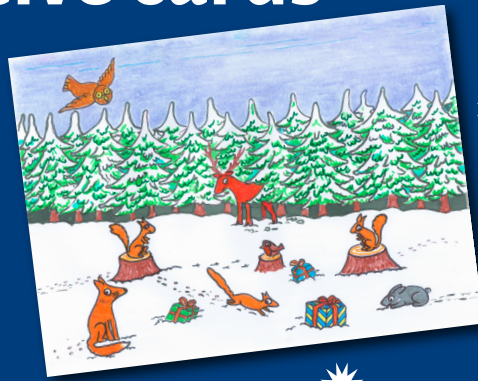
HMP/Establishment _____

Wing _____

Date of birth _____

☐ Please put me on the newsletter mailing list

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 _____

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Return to: The Prison Phoenix Trust
PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF
Please contact us if you would like to pay by bank transfer

From HMP Parc

Meditation helped a lot as I did have a mini meltdown because of all the noise, tension, and general atmosphere. I am still doing the lying on the floor breathing exercises, which does have a clearer flow of breath and is easier than slouched over!

I agree meditating enables me to deal calmly and objectively with problems. I just put the problem out of my head when meditating and then go back to it at a later time, even if it is just an hour later, as my head is not so cluttered and I can be calmer.

Formerly at HMP Haverigg

Went to a veterans' meeting yesterday. People kept interrupting our meeting with their own issues. Rude. Managed not to get cross – but it “cost” me two hours on my mat afterwards. Still, it works. Negative, angry, sad thoughts just drift past like passing clouds, when I just still myself and “know I am breathing in,” and “know that I am breathing out”. Simple, but it has taken years to get to this point!

From HMP Kirkham

I will be released soon in November this year, starting a new life will be stressful, I would like to improve and hone the skills I have learned through “Freeing the Spirit” and continue this journey.

A New Path (continued)

Sharing meditation and yoga is a most precious gift. Many are moved to share their yoga experience to help others. As the year ends, we would like to thank everyone for trusting in this path and encouraging others and to all those who took part in our Yoga30 challenge, raising awareness and funds to support the prison yoga community. Encouraged by everyone’s involvement, Paul did his 30 minute headstand! There by his side, we held our breath during his incredible balance at the Om Yoga Show in London.

We are delighted to have been recognised as **Yoga Charity of the Year** in their awards. Congratulations **everyone**; this award belongs to all of us. Paul joined me to accept the award on behalf of everyone practising and supporting meditation and yoga in prisons. He said: ‘the first thing I learned when starting to meditate in prison was that you are never alone. When you do yoga and meditate, you are always part of a community of people all around the world’.

Selina

Editor
Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips

Items that help

Some yoga books (like *Brightening Our Inner Skies*, see page 3) include yoga props to help find comfort in longer postures.

There are many alternative items you could use. Try these:

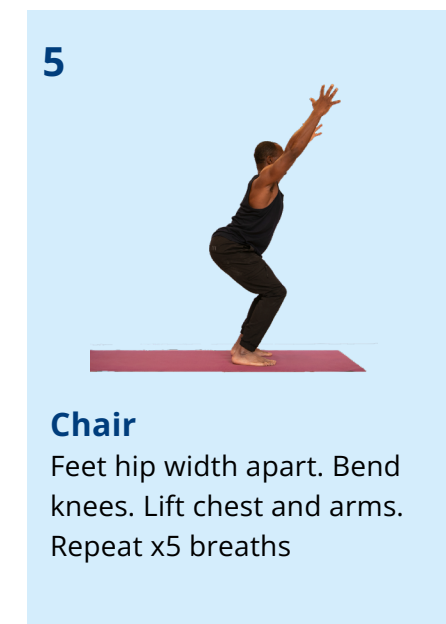
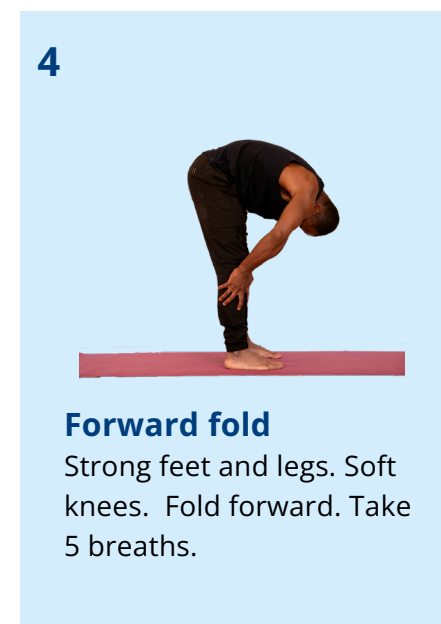
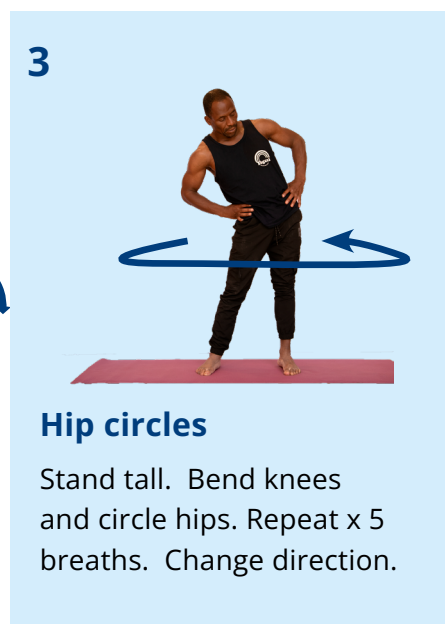
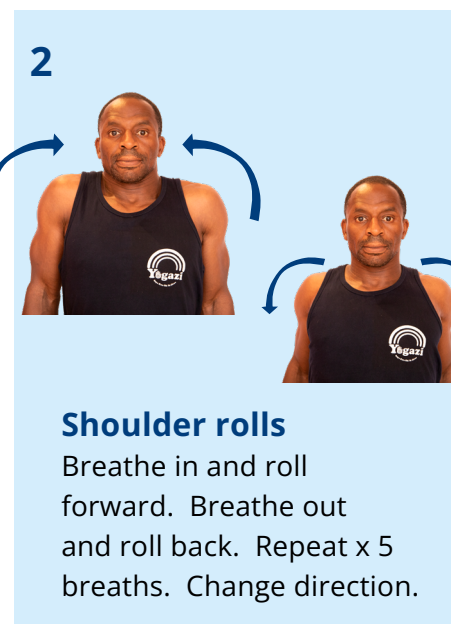
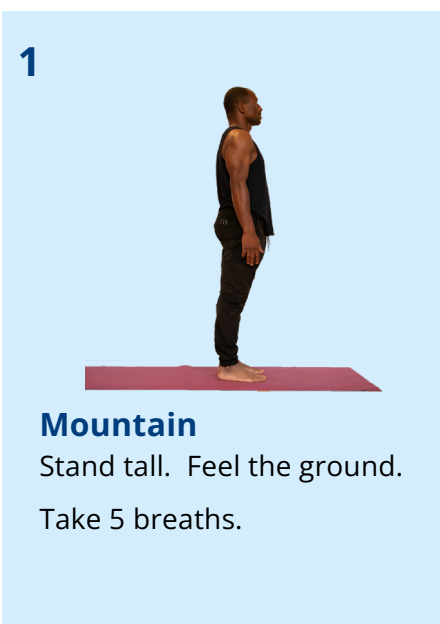
- 1. Folded blanket.** Use as support when sitting, or cushion back of the head when lying down.
- 2. Folded clothing.** Use as support under legs when sitting if hips feel uncomfortable.
- 3. Cushion or pillow.**
 - Use as a support when sitting,
 - OR place under both knees whilst lying on back (helps relieve lower back pain).
- 4. Chair.**
 - Sit with feet flat and hip width apart, and sit upright rather than leaning against the chair back (see photo above),
 - OR Lying down, rest lower legs on the seat of the chair (see photo right).
- 5. Rolled-up towel.** An alternative to your pillow or a rolled up mat (see back page).



Yoga Inner strength

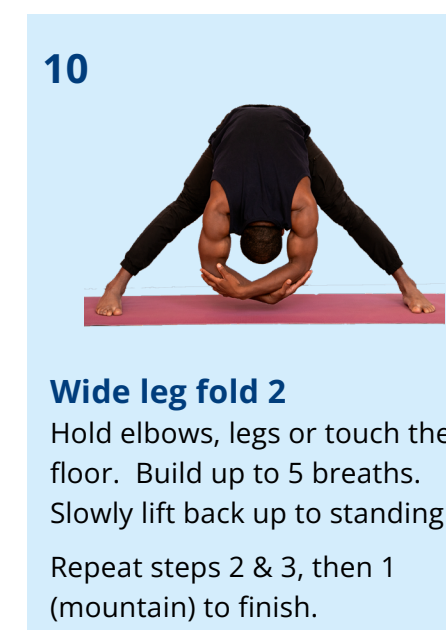
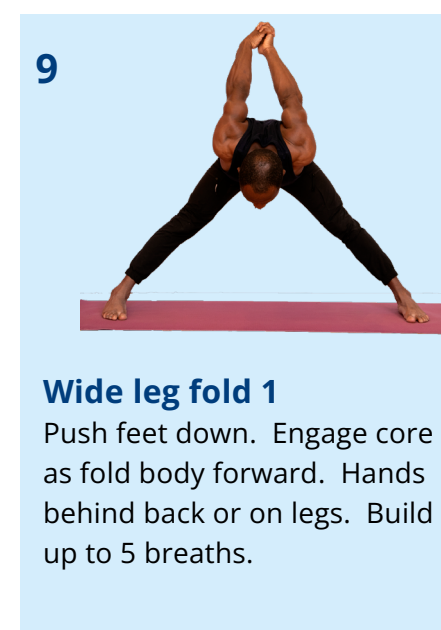
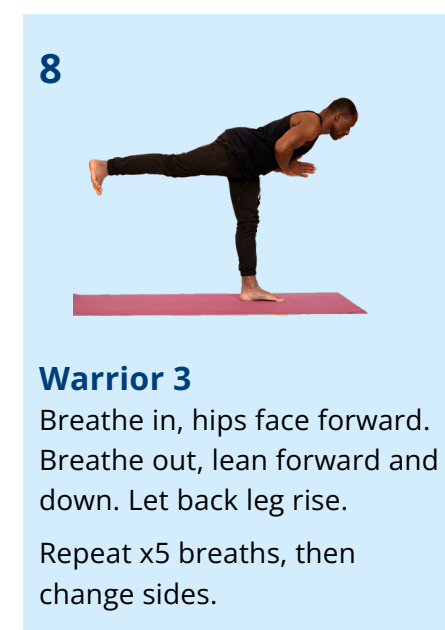
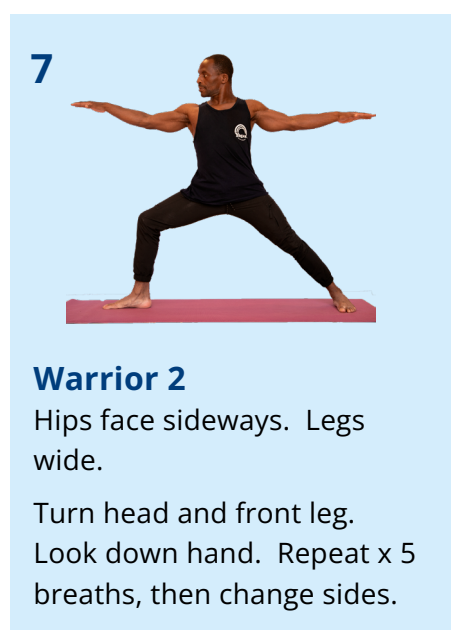
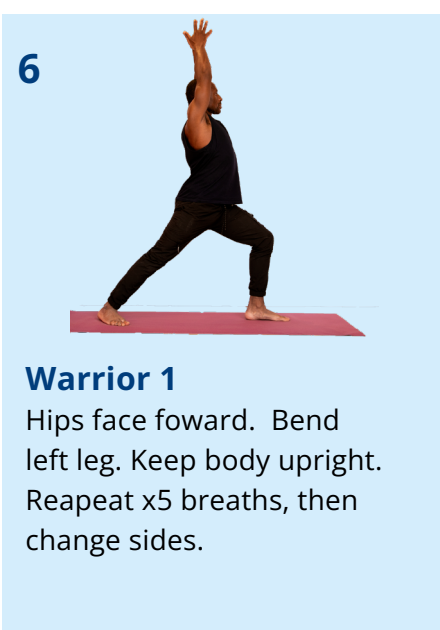
by Selina

Yoga can help us feel more in charge of ourselves and at ease. However, it is not always easy! Build up to some of these strong postures with regular practise. By moving the body with focus and to the rhythm of steady breathing, the mind responds by being quieter and clearer. Instead of being reactive we might notice that we start to respond more skillfully to things that are out of our control. Try this every day, if you can, and see how you get on.



Tips

- Engage your core muscles
- Remember to keep breathing
- Build up over time: if you can not do the whole sequence, do part of it and try again later



Cautions

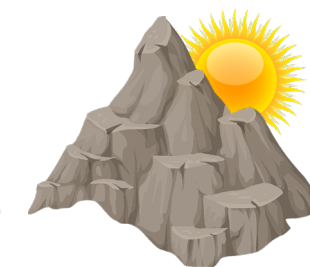
- Warm up well, including all main joints
- If painful, ease off

‘Allah said, “Do not be afraid; I am with you all the time, hearing and seeing”.’

Surah Taha 20:46, The Quran

‘No matter how tall the mountain is, it cannot block the sun.’

Chinese Proverb



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



Letting go to rest

by Lou

Constructive Rest



- **Try a folded blanket**, towel or pillow beneath your head
- **Palms up or face down**: you choose
- **Take a few sighing breaths** in through nose, out through mouth

‘Sometimes I call this practice the middle way between comfort and challenge.’

From challenge can come change; from comfort there can be ease.’

Norman Blair, Yin Yoga teacher and author.

Variation 1: Back Release



- **Hands beside you or on upper body**
- **Try a rolled up towel**, blanket or mat beneath shoulder blades
- **Choose level of stretch right for you**
- **Stay for 2 to 3 minutes**, if comfortable

Variation 2: Shoulder Release



- **Raise your arms** to a comfortable position
- **Start with a few breaths**
- **Try a rolled blanket**, towel or mat to ease the stretch

Tips

- See Top Tips (page 5) for items you can use to support your body when practising yoga
- If your mind is busy, try to count exhaled breaths from 1 to 10

Cautions

- Avoid Back Release or Shoulder Release if you feel any pinching or discomfort, or if you have a serious injury



P.O. Box328, 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 recieved funds in memory of Helen Dunwell and Malcom Cannon.