

Being Open



Welcome

Meditation and yoga can come with a lot of mental baggage when you think that you need to be a certain type of person, or in a so-called ideal environment. One of the people we support suggests: "Do not let people get you down because you are doing yoga." He recommends it to those with a lot on their mind as it helps his physical aches, pains, and mental health issues.

In a place closed in by physical barriers, freeing the mind is a chance to be more at ease with emotional burdens. One yoga practitioner from HMP Foston Hall struggled with addiction over half her life. Spending time in silence with meditation and yoga gave space for the flood of emotions to come in, but as those eased, she says "my head is clearer and some of my spirituality has returned."

To begin a path of self-discovery, our mind's resistance needs to get out of the way. By cultivating an openness to try something different, we have the chance to shift our day-to-day

experience. If lack of personal space adds to the challenge, try our tips for a way to practise in tight spaces on page 5.

When we stop fighting our mind's thoughts about things and become open to meeting each moment as it is, our experience can feel a lot easier to live with.

Continue reading on page 5

Love from us all

Selina, Chris, Lou, Padmakumara, Rebecca, 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.

From HMP Foston Hall

"my head is clearer and some of my spirituality has returned"

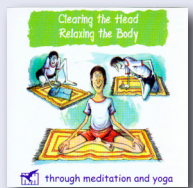
See page 3

See inside:

Free CD

Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body
Follow along.

Page 3



Yoga warm up

Find out how yoga can help you warm up for a workout

Page 6



Belly Breathing

A simple breathing practice to help with anxiety

Page 8



Letters

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

From HMP Jersey

Somehow things are coming together, my life and mind is still in chaos, but something is starting to click a little bit better for me.

I sit almost every morning for about 15-25 mins, hands on my belly, and breathe and clear my mind, listening to my breath, quietly, calm, feeling something I cannot explain. *All I know is it leaves me knowing I have done something good for myself.* I look forward to the next one and I sometimes do more than just the morning one, I hope I can help someone else.

There is a young lad in here and he said he was suffering and not coping well, I taught him to clutch his belly while breathing and he loves it! It was not easy to tell him as I am sure he thought "what the h*** was I talking about?!", but I told him it worked for me and to trust me and try it at least. Now he does the clenched hands sign to me when we pass and he sits with me in the garden. I feel incredible to have been able to pass something like that onwards and help a kid really to breathe and reset his wee mind. He was so stressed when we first talked, his face muscles were literally jittering he looked broken. He has already a gym buddy and he plays cards with the kids but now he has something to help him when he is alone at night or anytime he feels lost.

From HMP Exeter

A journey to self – be my best version.

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



From HMP Foston Hall

I have struggled with addiction for over half my life, I am now clean but with this I have had a flooding of emotion of all the problems I have not dealt with over the years. I had depression and anxiety but now my head is clearer and some of my spirituality has returned. I have started a Christian meditation group, I have done 2 sessions – I do struggle to slow my thoughts down. I am trying to practise positive thinking and being grateful for the little things we have.



From Onward Life

Unnamed

June

I have recently started up yoga in jail and I find it very useful. *It has helped me with my aches and pains and a bad shoulder and it has helped me with some of my mental health issues.* I find that yoga is pretty useful. I recommend yoga to people who have a lot on their mind. I have had one or two people take the mick out of me because I am doing yoga, I suggest do not let people get you down because you are doing yoga.

July

I have been doing yoga along with a teacher and also been doing yoga in my cell and in my free time. Our teacher is good at her job and helps you along the way and she is understanding and is not judgemental and she is not interested in what you have done. She is there to make a difference and help people as best as she can. I have recommended other prisoners to attend yoga, and some have been considering it.

From HMP Bure

I started to practise yoga using your book. So when practising yoga I focused on breathing. However, my mind was ruminating. This is the first time I have practised yoga without a teacher. I spent a total of 10 minutes on yoga. The benefit I had was to distract myself from being bored. Indeed, it was positive distraction.

From Midlands Prison, Ireland

May

I have been doing yoga and meditation for 2 years. I find it very good for me physically and mentally. I love doing new exercises and to challenge myself and look forward to yoga classes every week. *I do recommend it to everyone and to give it a try as I think it is great.*

June

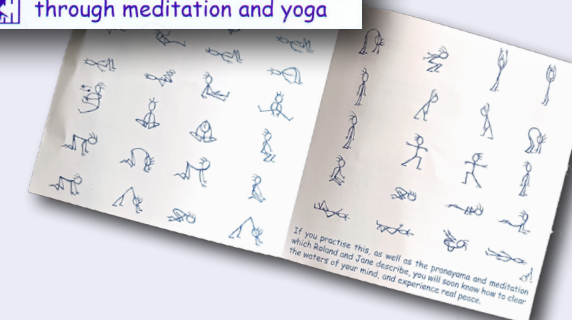
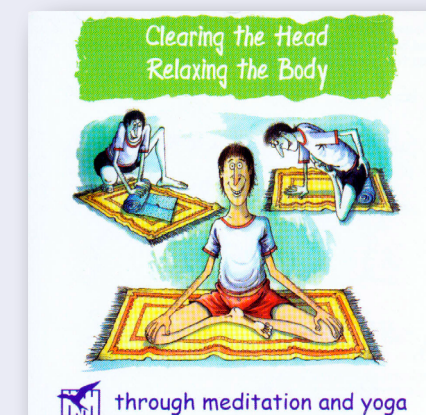
When I have issues in my mind and issues in my tissues I can now open the book and just do what ever page I want, to help me with yoga or meditation to feel better. I find it great for mind, body, and soul, and nobody is too old to learn new things.

From HMP Bure

Thankfully the one thing I have been able to maintain has been my meditation practice. I have been exploring its use for pain relief with some success. It has been a blessing, as has rereading the stories of other inmates in *Peace Inside* which is inspirational.



From Onward Life



A simple guide to yoga:

Order your free CD here. Listen and follow along to a sequence of stretches, breathing exercises, rest and meditation to help clear your mind.

The CD comes to you with hope and love. All you need is your body and your breath. About 70 minutes of practices for beginners and those with experience of meditation and yoga.

Write and let us know how you get on.

Order your free CD

(exclusively for those living and working in secure establishments)

Please send me a copy of *Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body*, practice CD.

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 Card Competition!



Help us design our Season's Greetings cards this year.

Please send your artwork to us by **Wednesday 2 October**. The winning design will feature on our festive cards in 2024, plus a small monetary prize.

Submissions should be drawn/painted on A5 (half the size of this page).

Please enclose this slip with your competition entry.

Name _____

Prison number (if in custody) _____

Address or prison _____

Email (if available) _____

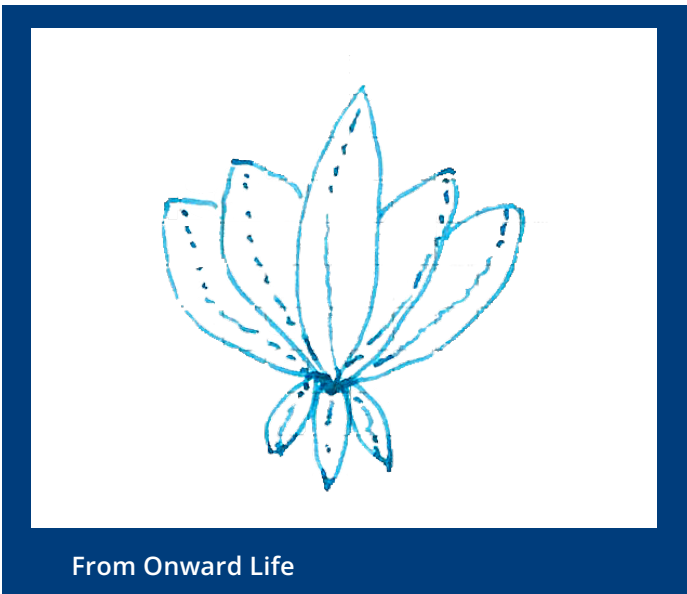
Designs used will be awarded a £30 prize.



By submitting my design to this competition, I give The Prison Phoenix Trust the unlimited right to replicate my artwork for commercial purposes (please tick).

Please post your designs to:
The PPT, PO Box 328,
Oxford, OX2 7HF

Thank You.



From HMP Five Wells

Beautiful Beings

I am you, and you are me,
Do not feel confused by what you cannot see,
Should we judge each other on our differences
at all?
Or rather should we not embrace the
reflection of our form?
You nor I chose our genetic path,
Yet both of us have the ability to cry and laugh,
There is a beautiful being inside our exterior
shell,
So, let us celebrate our new-found connection,
Shout out and stand proud,
Telling everyone that
I am you, and you are me.

“Individuals young and old striving to overcome fears of being alone often choose meditation practice as a way to embrace solitude. Learning how to ‘sit’ in stillness and quietude can be the first step toward knowing comfort in aloneness.”

bell hooks, author and educator

Being Open

(continued from page 1)

Many in our community are living in very difficult conditions and still finding things are coming together. One writer from HMP Jersey shares “my life and mind are still in chaos, but something is starting to click a little better for me.” He recommends belly breathing (see our guidance on the back page) when feeling lost. When we meet resistance, whether in meditation or yoga or the tension we feel, it is best to ease into it. Our sequence on pages 6 and 7 will warm up tense muscles to relax into being more at ease in bodies and hearts.

This autumn, a sense of quiet and change will gradually come in nature. Slowly and silently leaves drop, almost unnoticeable, until it has happened. From a prickly green shell, a shiny bright brown conker emerges. Regularly practising meditation or yoga, we might start to feel quite different; with our true self becoming uncovered, bright and shining, having been there all along.

Stick with it.



Selina

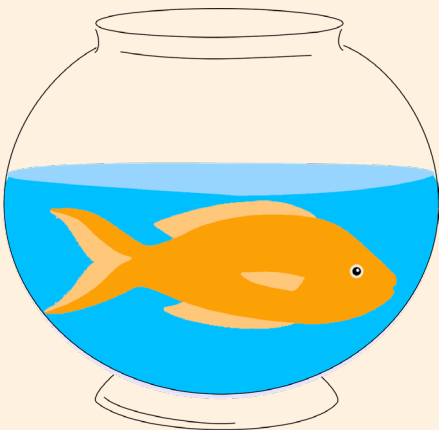
Editor

Director, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips Yoga in a tight space

Short on space in your room? Try this:

1. Sitting down, explore the different ways your joints move: toes, ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, neck.
2. What does it feel like to stretch, release, bend, scrunch or twist?
3. Do your left and right sides feel different?
4. Do the same thing standing up. Rest a hand on door or wall to help you balance.
5. Now try moving in time with your breaths: in and out.
6. How does it feel?



Warm up with yoga

by Victoria

This standing warm up will mobilise joints, and warm up muscles to prepare your body and mind for a workout. Try it before your gym session to help you tune in, focus, and prevent injury.

1



Stretch and Sigh

Start with knees bent and arms down.
Breathe in reaching up.
Sigh out lowering arms.
Do 5 times.

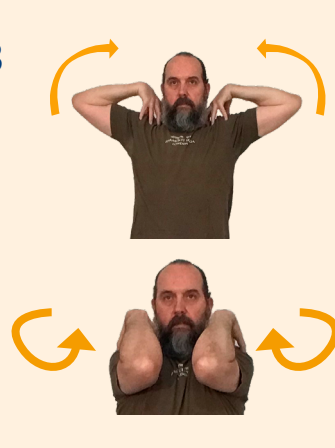
2



Hip Circles

Bend knees and circle hips.
Keep circling as you breathe in and out 5 times.
Change direction.

3



Shoulder Circles

Circle the elbows 5 times backwards.
Repeat 5 times forward.
Move with your breath.

4



Side stretch

Breathe in, raise left arm.
Breathe out, sideways bend to the left. Hold for 5 breaths.
Repeat on other side or alternate left and right side.

5



Eagle

Cross forearms.
Lift to shoulder height.
5 slow steady breaths.
Change sides.

6



Warrior 1

Hips face forward.
Bend front leg. Keep body upright.
5 breaths, change sides.

7



Stretched Flank

Rest forearm on thigh.
Extend other arm overhead.
Do this for 5 breaths on right and then left side.

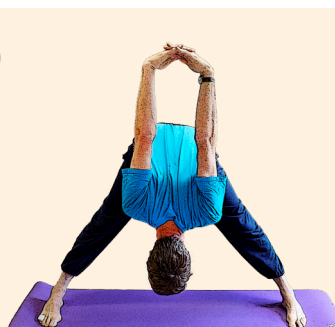
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Side Lunge

Wide stance, hips face forward.
Bend right knee, move left toes.
Stay for up to 5 breaths.
Repeat both sides.

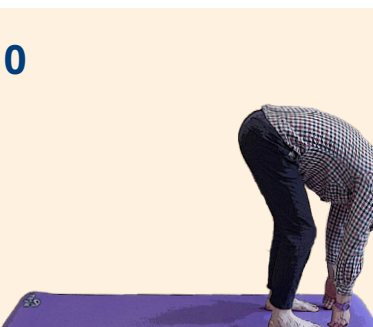
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Shoulder Stretch

Clasp hands behind back.
Let head hang loose.
Lift arms away.
Stay for 5 breaths.

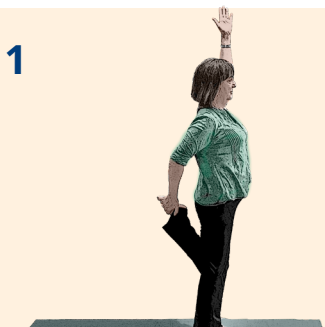
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Rag doll

Relaxed forward bend.
5 slow steady breaths.
Bend knees.

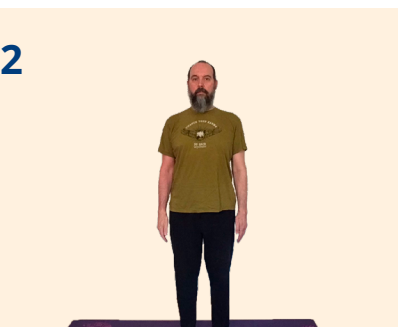
11



Stork

Stand tall, weight on left leg.
Lift right leg, hold foot.
Raise right arm when steady.
Hold for 5 breaths each side.

12



Mountain

Return to standing.
Relax face.
Notice how you feel.
5 slow steady breaths.

Cautions

- Listen to your body. Modify or miss out poses that may cause injury or pain.
- Protect your knees in postures 6, 7, and 8. Keep your bent knee above or behind the ankle.
- For posture 9 and 10, if you have high or low blood pressure, return to standing slowly.

Tips

- Practice on a non-slip surface. Clear the space around you.
- In each posture notice your feet and feel the strong connection to the ground beneath you.
- Repeat postures 1 to 3 between any of the others to gradually mobilise and ease any stiffness.

“Yoga means union of heart, mind, body, and spirit. It unites us and the people around us.”

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Yoga Guru and Spiritual Leader

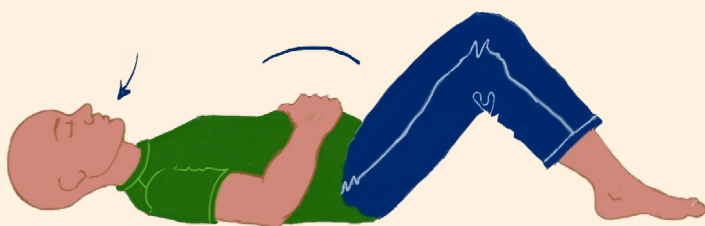
insidetime
the National Newspaper for Prisoners & Detainees

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

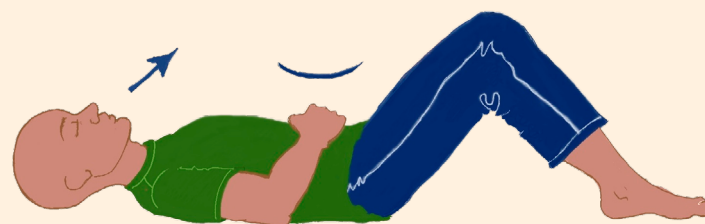
Belly Breathing

by Lou

- To relax the body and help with sleep
- To ease the mind, calm racing thoughts
- Helps to reduce stress and anxiety



1. **Hands on belly** (lying down, sitting or standing).
2. **Breathe in through nose.** Let belly inflate - growing bigger like a balloon.



3. **Breathe out.** Notice your belly relax.
4. **Repeat for 10 breaths** or for as long as you like.

Cautions

- Do not do this after a meal.
- If it does not feel good, stop.
- Try not to over breathe or exert. Breathe at your normal pace.

Tips

- Can do anytime, anywhere (standing, sitting or lying down).
- Breathe through nose if you can.
- Try to relax shoulders and jaw.



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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. This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Rachel Howell and Felix Redmill.