

# Reconnecting



## Welcome

What does it really mean to feel whole? And is it even possible — especially when life has been tough, messy, or full of regrets?

In this issue, we find out how by exploring that question from different angles. You will hear from people who have felt disconnected — cut off from themselves, others, and any sense of peace — and how, through simple practices like yoga and meditation, they have started to feel more alive, more steady, and more connected again.

Someone we support at HMP Greenock, like many, thought yoga was nonsense. But now? It helps him pass the time and feel more relaxed. He is not alone.

Across these pages, you will find honest reflections from men and women who turned to yoga to help with sleep, stress, anger, or anxiety — never expecting that, somewhere along the way, they would start to feel more like themselves.

**“Yoga has changed me from an angry, violent person, to the calm, relaxed level-headed person I am today.”**

From HMP Five Wells

Yoga is not about bending into fancy postures. It is about breathing, pausing, and finding a bit of calm in the chaos. A reader at HMP Bedford finds meditation helps him see how, when he is caught up in negative thoughts, he can allow them to pass.

**Continue reading on page 5**

## Love from us all

*Selina, Chris, Dervla, Emma, Imogen, Lou, Lucy, Padmakumara, Rebecca, 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:

### Discover Give it 10

**10 minutes of yoga a day for 7 days**  
*Experience how yoga can help relax your body & calm your mind to reconnect*  
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### Onward Life

*Yoga and a spiritual practice are helping plan for the future*  
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### Be kind Get reconnected

*A heart breath sequence for self-compassion*  
Page 8



# Letters

Thank you to those kindly sharing their experiences with us to help others.

## Formerly at HMP Parc

It has been very hard, the past 3 weeks, waiting for the decision and meditation has been a massive benefit to me to help calm me down and keep me focused on a positive decision. My moods have been quite erratic and I have had extreme low thoughts and moods, but seem to have gotten through it all.

## From HMP Glenochil

I have had a couple of challenging times recently including a particularly distressing incident in the music workshop where a guy was hurling particularly nasty abuse at me. I responded by doing some mindfulness of breathing meditation, and I calmly tried to choose my actions rather than simply reacting.

I took time to try to decide how to act, but my conclusion was that I did not know what to do. However, I am comfortable now by not being sure, following Buddhist principles. So I did not do anything. And in the end that was the skilful thing to do at that moment. I still have not decided what to do about it and that is OK.

I do find gardening meditative and restorative and I am learning so many practical skills which will stand me well for the future. I love being outside in the elements and I am very comfortable indeed with one-ness.

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



## From, HMP

I have been in this prison for several years and have been so thankful for your postings and materials. This summer I will be released but will continue to build on the excellent breathing and relaxation techniques I have used here. Earlier in my sentence Hatha Yoga classes were offered on Friday pms and I attended 2 courses. This is when I learned of your Book/CD resources.



## January's Twilight Sky

As I gazed into the distance  
Venus shone brightly  
As I drew deep Breaths  
My heart beat sounded, clear  
As I held on to those deep breaths  
Silently the world turned  
As I released my inner purrs  
My stress untangled  
As I fixed my upward gaze  
My breath blended into skylight  
I became whole

Origami butterflies: From HMP Bullingdon

## From, HMP Greenock

Before discovering yourselves and starting my yoga and meditation journey, I really struggled in here with what I call 'sensory overload'. Keys jingling, heavy boots, doors banging and shouting non-stop and about 100 different sounding bells and alarms. This is hell for anyone, but even more so for a person with autism. Since starting my now daily routines of both yoga and meditation, I can honestly say that I very rarely even notice these horrific, sensory overloading noises. Practising yoga and meditation daily has greatly helped me to be able to almost completely block out these sounds and the nonsense of the prison environment.

Here is what an average weekday currently looks like for me:

06:00	Wake up
06:15 - 07:45	Clearing the Head, Relaxing the Body CD
07:45 - 08:45	Seated and walking meditation
09:00 - 11:30	Work in the bike shed
LUNCH	
12:30 - 13:30	Practise yoga
14:00 - 15:00	Work in the bike shed
16:00 - 17:30	Rest and TV
DINNER	
18:30 - 19:30	Recreation
19:30 - 22:00	Rest and TV/music

Weekends are similar with different timings and wellbeing centre, library, etc, also affects Tuesday and Friday.

Mental Health Awareness Week  
**Give it 10 Yoga Challenge**  
10 minutes of yoga a day for 7 days

We were delighted to share this challenge and see our community connect through shared practice



If you would like to try **Give it 10** please complete and return the slip below for your set of practice sheets

Experience how yoga can help relax your body and calm your mind



## Give it 10 Yoga Challenge

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prisoner Number (if in custody) \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title (if staff) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of prison or establishment \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: **The PPT, P.O. Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF**



Pope Francis: A Legacy of Compassion Behind Bars

Pope Francis brought a message of mercy and hope to people in prison. He visited regularly, washed the feet of people he met in prison, and reminded the world that no one is beyond love or redemption. He spoke out for justice that heals, not just punishes, and believed deeply in second chances. His message was clear: everyone — no matter their past — is worthy of dignity, forgiveness, and the chance to begin again.



**Become a PPT trustee**  
**Would you like to join our Board of trustees?**  
We welcome people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. If you have left prison, hospital or other secure establishment, please get in touch for further information and how to apply.

What is involved?

I am interested in applying to be a PPT trustee

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address (must be back in the wider community)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Return to: **The PPT, P.O. Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF**

Onward Life

January, HMP Moorland

Yoga and meditation should be promoted more by healthcare professionals. I teach it here on a Thursday morning and have inspired others to also purchase the books I use to teach them. I am using yoga for both fitness and recovery now.

I have been granted Category D status!!! I am in shock as I have literally just found out. My family are really happy! I finally feel like I have achieved something. There might also be an opportunity for me to teach yoga there. 😊

April, HMP Haverigg

I will be doing chair yoga with my mum and dragging my sister to classes too. Both yoga and meditation will be a massive help on the out. It will be easier to learn more about Buddhism after release and find a teacher. A teacher approved by my Probation Officers. Buddhism teaches no harm of any kind no matter what. I can do a type of meditation called Metta Bhavana where by we cultivate love and kindness towards ourselves, a friend, someone we don't like or who has hurt us, a neutral person and the wider community or the world. We try to limit our suffering by not becoming too emotional about things we cannot change. If you control your mind you control your emotions.

I will definitely keep in touch with you and The PPT after release. As far as I am aware, I do not have any friends outside of prison, so your friendship will be valued even more.

I am now a Mental Health Orderly. Less work, more money 😊. This means I can now do the Saturday class as well as my usual Sunday one. It also means that I can practise on a Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat and Sun. And start doing the park run again.

I am also the Veterans Representative which I have been doing a lot with and trying to do even more with. That is something I will do when I get out.

Reconnecting

Continued from page 1

So what is this thing we are talking about? The yoga, the meditation — they are tools. But the real work is what they help us uncover: a sense of wholeness that has always been there, just hidden under pain, grief, trauma, or shame. This is not about getting it perfect. It is about giving yourself a chance to just be — no masks, no pressure, no past in the way.

Even just sitting in a chair, moving a little, noticing your breath — it starts to shift something. And when that awareness creeps into everyday things, like brushing your teeth (see below), the good stuff — those calm, connected moments — start showing up in the rest of life too.

When we move to the rhythm of our breath, it not only helps release pent up tension, and emotion, but acts as the vital thread that connects our physical being (our body) to our spiritual essence. Its rhythm brings balance and alignment between the two. We are all worthy of love, forgiveness, and a fresh start. The heart-focussed movements on the back page can help you feel calmer and more connected to yourself. Give it a try — you might be surprised by what you feel.

Whether you are brand new or have been practising a while, we hope this issue gives you something solid to support you. A reminder that you are not broken. You are not too far gone. You are already whole — just peeling back the layers to see it.

Welcome back to yourself.

*Selina*  
Editor  
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust



Top Tips **Connected Moments**

Stuck in racing thoughts, worry or numbness. Try these:

1. **Brushing teeth** – How does the toothpaste taste and the brush feel
2. **Eating** – Slow down. Really taste your food
3. **Waiting in a queue** – Bored? Impatient? Notice without changing
4. **Walking** – Pay attention to each step & walking in time with your breathing
5. **Listening to nature** – Can you hear birds, the wind, or rain
6. **During an argument or stress** – Pause, take three breaths. Feel the ground

For guidance, write to a mentor at The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF



# Cool Down with Yoga

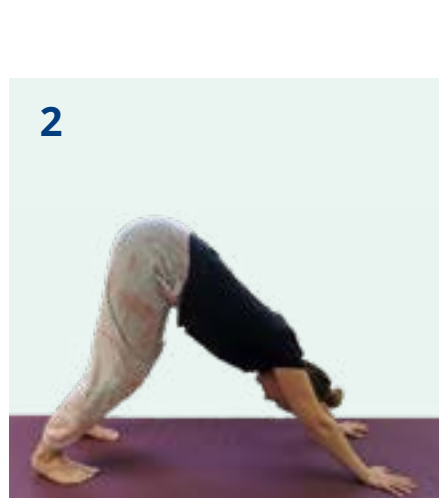
by Victoria

- Steady movements to tune in and reconnect
- Ease muscles and cool your mind
- A cooler practice for warm environments



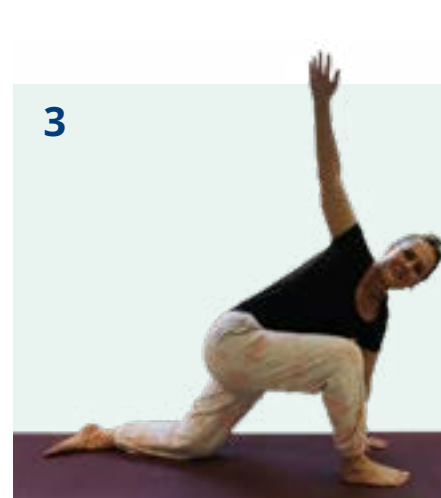
## Cat/Cow

- Arch back as breathe out
- Dip back as breathe in
- 5 steady breaths



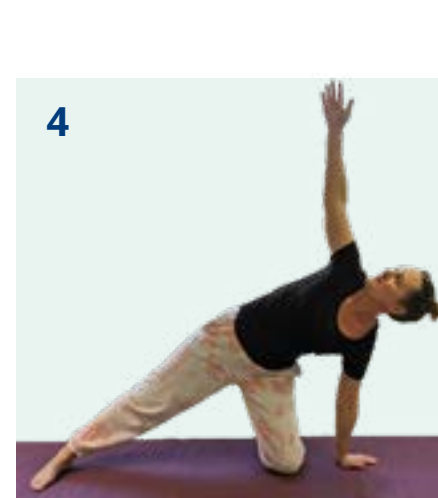
## Downward Dog

- Lift hips up and back
- Stay for 5 steady breaths
- Step heels up and down



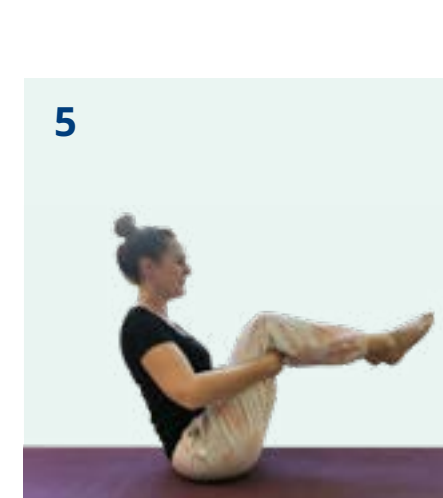
## Lunge with Twist

- Right foot forward
- Left knee and hand down
- Turn to right, lift arm
- Take 5 breaths
- Repeat on other side



## Gate Side Stretch

- Kneel up, left leg to left side
- Bring right hand to the floor
- Lift left arm, side stretch
- Hold 5 breaths
- Repeat on other side



## Core Balance

- Balance on sitting bones
- Hug knees in
- Extend legs (arms optional)
- Hold for up to 5 breaths



## Bridge

- Push feet in to ground
- Allow hips to lift
- Stay in position for up to 5 breaths



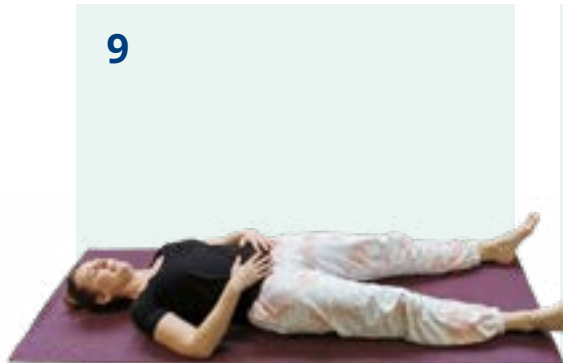
## Coil

- Hug knees to chest
- Rock from side to side
- 5 steady breaths



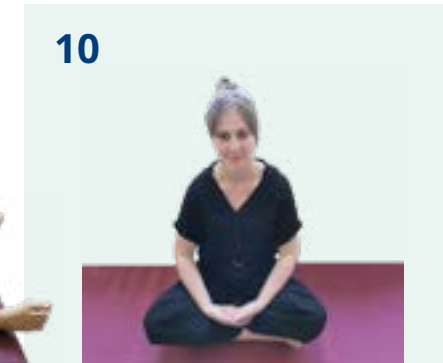
## Forward Bend Hug

- Sit with knees bent
- Fold upper body, gently hug your legs
- Stay 5 breaths



## Rest

- Get comfortable
- Tense and relax the body
- Count each breath or be with the quiet
- Stay for 5 minutes or longer



## Focus the Mind

- Sit up with back straight, eyes open or closed
- Left palm on right, thumbs touching
- Notice each breath in and breath out
- Try this for 1 minute

## Cautions

- This sequence is not suitable if you have mobility concerns and knee, hip or wrist pain
- Avoid Gate (4) if you have knee, hip or ankle injuries, swap for a seated side stretch
- Stay upright in Core Balance (5), lift chest, use stomach muscles. Avoid leaning or rounding in lower back

## Tips

- Practise on a mat or other suitable non-slip surface for safety and comfort
- Put a folded blanket or towel under knees for comfort in 1, 3 and 4
- Sit on a rolled-up towel, or folded pillow in seated postures for hip and lower back comfort

**insidetime**  
The National Newspaper for Prisoners & Ex-prisoners

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

*“When the breath is calm, the mind is calm, and the self is revealed.”*

From The Yoga Sutras of Pantanjali, a text about yoga philosophy



# Reconnect to Compassion

A heart and breath sequence by Lou

- A practice of self-compassion and kindness
- Encourages self-forgiveness
- Can aid healing

*Even in the darkest times, show yourself the kindness and strength you need to rise again. You are worthy of love, forgiveness, and change.*

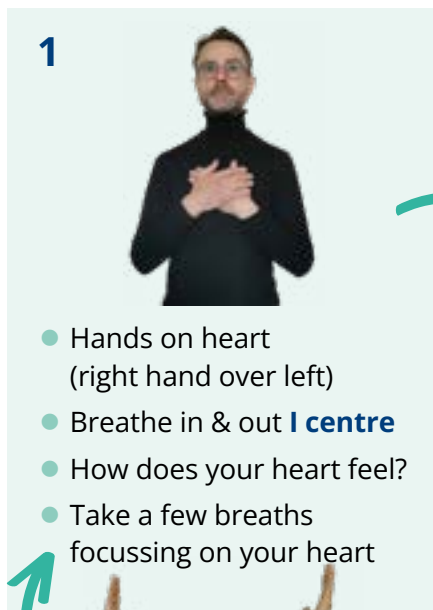
Inspired by academic, Kristen Neff

## Tips:

- Say silently in your head the **words in blue** for each movement
- Practise bringing attention to your heart
- Feel the physical beating
- Any other feelings?

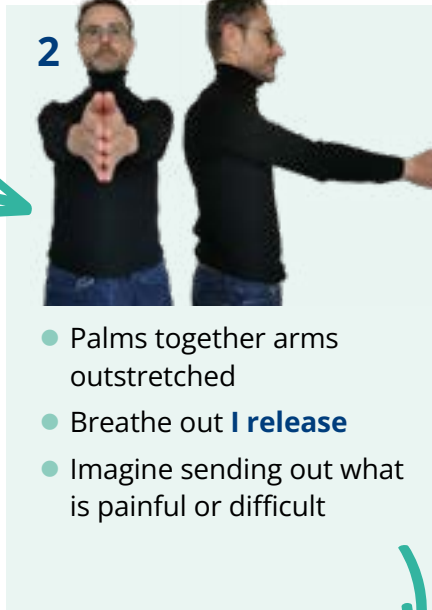
## Cautions:

- Stop if too emotionally challenging and notice the ground under your feet
- This may get easier
- Practise without the arm movements if in pain



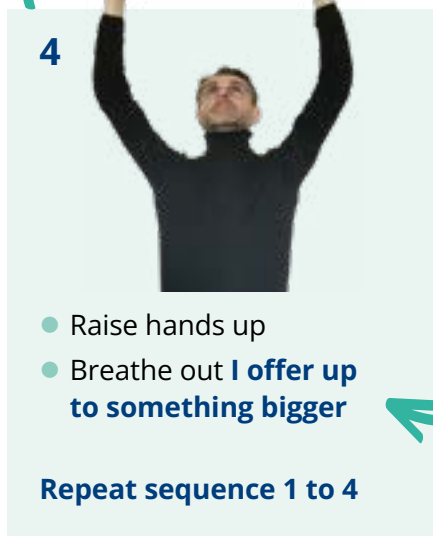
1

- Hands on heart (right hand over left)
- Breathe in & out **I centre**
- How does your heart feel?
- Take a few breaths focussing on your heart



2

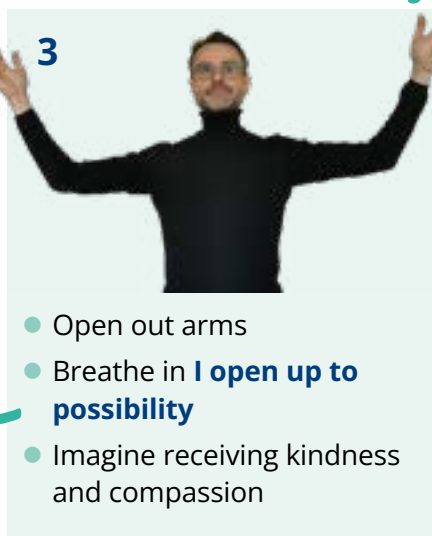
- Palms together arms outstretched
- Breathe out **I release**
- Imagine sending out what is painful or difficult



4

- Raise hands up
- Breathe out **I offer up to something bigger**

Repeat sequence 1 to 4



3

- Open out arms
- Breathe in **I open up to possibility**
- Imagine receiving kindness and compassion



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 on supporters' kindness and financial generosity 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 Reverend James Raymond Tysoe.*