

Calm in stormy waters



Welcome

Life can feel turbulent, stormy, and hard to see through. Yet beneath the surface, a quiet current flows.

Even a small glimpse of calm reminds us it is always possible and natural to want more of it. Yoga philosophy teaches that deep within each of us is something steady, clear, and whole. The chaos of the world, our thoughts, and surroundings can pull us in every direction, but that sacred stillness never leaves us.

As Amit Ray, renowned author and yoga teacher, says: ***“Deep down, nature is inherently peaceful, calm and beautiful. The universe as a whole is perfect. The chaos is on the surface.”*** Even in prison, this is true. Life may feel harsh or confined, but inside, the calm current is always there. Every mindful breath and attentive movement is a way to reach it. One reader writes about this on page 2. ‘I now realise that the angry, violent person is not actually my true self. ...Now there is a smile on my face when I think about the future.’

Yoga may seem like ‘just moving and breathing,’ but with full attention, it reunites body, mind, and our inner spirit. The muddy waters of thoughts and emotions begin to settle, revealing the clear reflection of our true self. These moments lift spirits. ‘For this sweet second is peaceful and calm. When the sun rises, hope rises. The day renewed.’

Continue reading on page 4

Love from us all

Selina, Cathy, Chris G, Chris, Dilly, Dervla, Imogen, Lou, Lucy, Padmakumara, Rebecca, Victoria and all our volunteers

The Prison Phoenix Trust supports people in prison 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 people in prison and prison staff through correspondence, books, CDs, DVDs, newsletters, free taster workshops and weekly classes.

See inside:

Freedom Inside

Yoga and meditation double CD set

Order your FREE copy
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It is the little things

Letters and top tips about embracing small positives everyday
Pages 4 and 5

Yoga for Inner Light

Movements ideal for small spaces
Pages 6 and 7



Letters

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

From HMP

Since we last were in contact my meditation has started bearing fruit. I mean, by that, that I am seeing results. I now know what it meant when spiritual people speak of becoming one. I now realise that the person with problems isn't me, the angry, violent person isn't actually my true self.

Yes, I had read things along these lines many times before. But now it makes sense, like awakening to the truth. I knew that this work would help me, but never thought it would be so simple. As simple as doing nothing.

These are very exciting times for me, this insight was exactly what I needed, a sign post to my salvation, and came at just the right time. Everything just fell into place and is still falling into place.

Now there is a smile on my face when I think about the future. Let me tell you about my plans when I leave here.

I am going to take advantage of the prison rehab scheme and am applying to the new Phoenix Future place. 30 years on and off drugs, it is time to admit I need help, even if it's just help with my meditation. Now I have this tool at my disposal, things are going to massively change.



Artwork from HMP Norwich

From HMP Whatton

Yoga and meditation resources have taught me to be calmer with myself and others and to actually use the time to think before I speak.

The Give It 10 pack did help as it was in sync with my Autism Guide (which tells people how to speak to and approach me). Yes, it was very helpful.

Hopefully this is the last prison for me, until my release in January, so hopefully I can continue to communicate with The PPT, it has really helped me work on my writing, my mind and soul, communication skills, being able to talk to others (not so reclusive anymore). With roughly 19 months to go, this is and has been the best support, together with some family members, who I am working to better their relationship with me.



'Peace in the mountains', HMP

From HMP

Extract from "The Garden"

I sit upon the garden seat

Shoulders relaxed, on the grass my feet

Back is straight, head held high

Arms relaxed, hands on my thighs.

From HMP Erlestoke

Yoga calms me, helps my trauma and helps me not being stiff. It stretches my muscles and clicks my bones in a good way that makes me feel more agile and flexible.

From HMP Wakefield

It has been almost 3 years, but I feel that I am still coming to terms with my situation. With the help of dedicated people and staff here, I am coping, there will be ups and downs, but I am slowly building up a toolkit of resources, contacts and friends to support me.

Practising is helping me become more resilient and able to cope with day to day life in prison.

From HMP Highdown

I thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the Give It 10 Yoga Challenge. The prime reason for taking up the yoga challenge was to balance my abnormally elevated energy and fluctuating mood. I wanted to learn more about meditation and yoga challenge helped me with getting rid of my depressed mood and feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

I am pleased to say that yoga challenge cleared the fog from my brain and changed the whole orientation of my well being to the best.

From HMP

Thanks for your yoga DVDs, not even after the beginning, I feel big difference of my injured shoulder. It is a great warm up before you go to the gym, also meditation helps my stress if I am having a bad day. It solves a lot unnecessary fights and calm myself.

From HMP

I am trying to learn to be comfortable in the uncomfortable. I am trying to find a solution to the broken system of things in prison that is obtainable for myself, by myself to give me a fighting chance of rehabilitation and to shut the revolving door that prison has become, since that is all that is offered.

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



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Oxford OX2 7HF**

From HMP Garth

Practising consistently throughout my illness has been a constant source of support When my breathlessness was at its worst the breathing relaxation meditation gave me moments of respite and kept me going.

Things are slowly getting better. Coming to terms with a life limiting diagnosis has its challenges, but my head is in a better place.

I am finally understanding properly the need for mindfulness in terms of the state of my mind and being grateful for the small things everyday and making a point of thanking others for their small kindnesses.

From the moment I was found guilty I had given up. The depression associated with that was so subtle and became my normality so I could not use my existing mental health coping strategies.

My change in attitude and approach has contributed to the improvements I have been making and allowed me to deal with the loss of my last contacts with the outside world.

Onward life

Congratulations to one of our readers on winning a Hope and Fulfilment Award. The Prison Reform Trust judges were moved to learn how through his Inner Strength, Movement and Breathwork course at HMP Haverigg, others were not just helped with their mental and physical health but he showed his peers that they are worthy of hope, possibility and kindness.

INNER STRENGTH MOVEMENT & BREATHWORK

Inner Strength Movement and Breathwork's purpose is to help guide its practitioners through the world of movement and breathwork practices, so that they are able to get the most out of their practice.

Switch Off Sunday (SOS)
2:30PM - 3:30PM

A one hour session in the gymnasium that introduces you to how a movement and breathwork session could run outside of a secure residential environment. These are themed sessions that cover the same forms (poses) each week and run for four weeks at a time.

Reasons To Practice

Balance & Flexibility
Prevent injury, build strength, maintain joint mobility, maintain an active, lower risk lifestyle, improve posture and movement, and improve the quality of life.

Strength, Injury Prevention & Joint Health
Improve the quality of life, prevent injury, maintain joint mobility, maintain an active, lower risk lifestyle, improve posture and movement, and improve the quality of life.

Recovery & Longevity
Improve your health for as long as you possibly can, and at higher performance levels, both for your own personal goals and for the benefit of others.

Efficiency & Body Awareness
Improve your control over your body, better technique and improved muscle efficiency.

Recovery Work
Improve your control over your body, better technique and improved muscle efficiency.

Muscle Activation & Strength
Improve your control over your body, better technique and improved muscle efficiency.

Mindfulness, Sleep & Stress Reduction
Improve your control over your body, better technique and improved muscle efficiency.

Please see the Gym Staff or for more information

From HMP Risley

The meditation helps me to calm my mind as I have a parole hearing coming up next month and my mind was racing a lot but now it has slowed right down I feel a lot better, I was listening to the CD as I was writing this letter and feel relaxed.

From HMP Eastwood Park

I really enjoy the yoga, which I do in-cell.

Also, something that I do regularly which helps me is to keep a 'positives'/gratitude diary. This way, even if there is just one positive thing that happens in the day, I can look back on these things and see how many positives there have been, it helps to distract from negative thinking. Another thing I like to do is what I call 'meditation poetry'. This is where I empty my mind and meditate for 10 to 15 minutes and then start to write. I am building up a collection. I thought I would share one with you.

As I watch the sun rise
The colours of life enter my eyes
For this sweet second
Is peaceful and calm
When the sun rises, hope rises
The day renewed
What can you do?

From HMP Five Wells

I was going through my paperwork and found the lovely letter hidden beneath old work schedules and other paper detritus. I have also been very busy since May, as I am now the official 'Art and Design' class mentor. A well-paid job with very loose terms of reference, other than being a good opportunity to help others find therapy, peace (perhaps) and hidden talents.

As I sit here, waiting for the Wimbledon single final to commence, my fan blows warm air around my cell, the sun is glaring down outside. It is hot, sticky and uncomfortable, but boy am I grateful for this life. A cell to myself, an evening meal on its way, a colour TV. I still have good communication with some friends and some of my family and I have a good job too.

Calm in stormy waters

Continued from page 1

Last week at a new yoga class in HMP Portland, overlooking the sea, those taking part were surprised how calm they felt. In the stillness at the end of a class we remember who we are. A sense of connection with others. A quiet shared calm.

The noise of life may return, and old habits can stir the waters again or get stuck like sandbanks. Yet with steady practice, clarity grows. Bit by bit, we see ourselves more clearly and find the strength to act differently, to expand those moments of calm and opportunity for peace.

Selina
Editor
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust



Top Tips Finding glimmers each day

- 1. Recognising time, patience and listening as acts of kindness
- 2. Enjoying a hot meal on a cold day
An extra slice of toast
Sugar for your coffee
- 3. A pat on the back
- 4. Sunshine breaking through the clouds
- 5. A friendly phone call or letter
- 6. Fresh air in the yard - whatever the weather



There are also ideas in letters on page 4

Yoga for Inner Light

by Dilly

- Movement for small spaces
- Create warmth in mind and body
- Build strength and focus

1



Touch the sky

- Interlace hands
- Reach towards the sky
- Look up
- Release hands
- Look forwards, arms to side

2



Shake it off

- Feel your feet on ground
- Begin to shake hands and arms
- Bounce into knees
- Smile your lips
- Continue for 2-3 minutes

3



Hands to centre

- Feet to floor, knees soft
- One hand on chest
- One hand on stomach
- Breathe in, counting to 5
- Breathe out, counting to 7

4



Tree pose

- Gaze at a spot ahead
- Place the sole of one foot on the inside of other leg
- Hands up or on hips
- Soften knee of standing leg

5



Warrior 3

- From pose 4
- Hinge forward at hips
- Move gaze to floor
- Extend the raised leg behind you
- Hold for up to 5 breaths

6



Warrior 1

- Place back foot on floor
- Lunge into the front knee
- Tuck hips under and lift chest
- Keep a small bend in back knee

7



Forward fold

- Step feet shoulder width
- Small bend in knees
- Hinge forward at hips
- Head hangs heavy
- Slowly uncoil to stand

Repeat postures 4-7 on other side

8



Plank

- From forward fold
- Place hands to floor
- Step legs behind you
- Keep hips raised
- Option - place knees on the floor

9



Sphinx pose

- Lie on front
- Elbows beneath shoulders
- Chest lifts to sky
- Press through hands and top of feet
- Head forward, gaze down nose

10



Home Pose

- Knees wide
- Big toes to touch
- Sink hips to heels
- Reach chest and hands forwards
- Head hangs heavy

“To go in the dark with a light is to know the light. To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is travelled by dark feet and dark wings.”

To Know the Dark
by Wendell Berry, poet, author and environmentalist

Tips

- Try 5 breaths in each posture
- Keep joints soft
- Soften face and jaw
- Breathe through your nose if comfortable

Cautions

- Practise on a non-slip surface. Clear the space around you
- If shoulder injury, raise arms to shoulder height
- Stop if it hurts
- Speak to healthcare if you are unsure

insidetime
the National Newspaper for Prisoners & Detainees

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

Meditation postures

by Selina

- Encourage a deeper meditation experience
- Enable harmony of your mind, body and breath
- Choose which posture is most comfortable

1. Sit upright. Back straight
2. Look softly downwards
Chin slightly lowered
3. Rest your hands in your lap
Left hand on top
Thumbs touching
4. Breathe through your nose
if you can
5. Count each breath to 10
and begin again
6. Start for 1 minute. Build the
time gradually if it feels ok



Chair

- Have your feet flat
- Use padding to relax legs

Important:

- If you have PTSD, depression, or are experiencing flashbacks, check with your mental health team first
- Do not practise under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Stop meditating if troubling thoughts feel too much

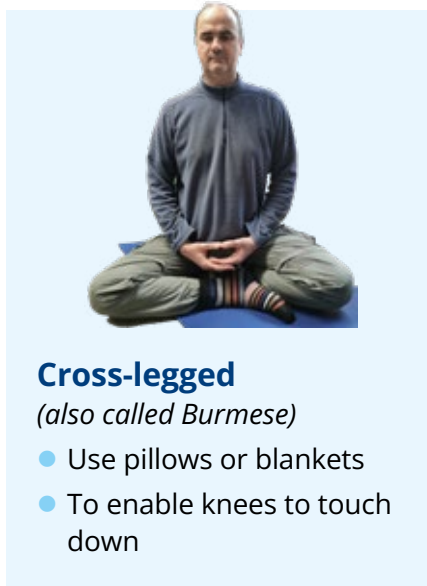
If troubling thoughts arise, flood in, or you feel anxious:

- Push feet or hands into the ground
- Look around you, notice things in the room
- If it overwhelms you, stop and wait until you feel more stable



Kneeling

- Use pillows or blankets
- To reduce pressure on legs and knees



Cross-legged

(also called Burmese)

- Use pillows or blankets
- To enable knees to touch down

Tips:

- Choose which posture is most comfortable for you
- Have your back free from support to be alert and awake
- Keep letting go of trying to make anything happen

Write to The PPT if you would like more guidance or instruction for meditating in lotus positions



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 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 Marguerite Barwick.