

Quiet strength



Welcome

A reader at HMP Wakefield reminds himself the sun will be out again. This simple observation highlights something powerful: life changes, even when it feels stuck. The light returns. Moments shift. Things are not fixed.

In life, we can notice small glimpses of hope. The sunlight after days of darkness and gloom. These are reminders that life continues to offer brightness, even in dark times. Many people notice these little sparks of life and feel something stir inside, a glimpse of hope, a quiet strength that is theirs to claim.

Even with these moments, it is normal to feel heavy or hopeless at times. Yoga philosophy calls this dukkha: the fact that life can be hard, painful, and unfair. Feeling despair is human. On page 3 a writer notices how since practising meditation he is less angry and less likely to snap. This is the first step toward quiet strength: noticing what is happening inside without being swept away by it.

Yoga also teaches abhyāsa, steady practice. You do not need to feel better immediately. Even small actions, like following a routine, breathing mindfully, sitting quietly, all matter. As many in prison have noticed, a set daily programme can anchor the day. "Following a strict programme keeps me steady", says a writer at HMP Hull. These small efforts are acts of courage and endurance and what yoga calls tapas.

Continue reading on page 5

Love from us all

Selina, Chris G, Chris, Dilly, Dervla, Izzy, Katy, 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:

Give it 10 Yoga Challenge Mental Health Awareness Week

JOIN US for a week of yoga and meditation for improved mental health

Page 4



Yoga Without Words

One of our most popular books, but with no reading required

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Page 3



Breath of Hope

Helps to release shoulder tension, feel brighter and more positive

Page 8



Letters

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

From HMP Wakefield

Due to closures, I am meditating alone, this combined with the dark and cold is difficult. But importantly, not impossible and not permanent. **It will pass, soon the sun will be back, and we will be able to come together to meditate and be.**



From HMP Hull

I have been following a strict programme of yoga, meditation, exercise, diet and learning. Not just losing 8kg since arrival, I have gained great strength, flexibility and confidence, which is something to be proud of after a major accident in 2023. I never thought I would ever recover to my old physical self.

Taking inspiration from Peace Inside and The PPT's Give it 10 Yoga Challenge, **I have found my true self which I continue to discover and want to develop further.** I have now signed up for The British Wheel of Yoga course which I hope to start next week through the Prison Education Trust. This will be an exciting step for me and will help me expand my knowledge and practice. Thank you again from my heart.

Along with my own personal practice and leading a couple of lessons on the wing, I both love the benefits and freedom meditation and yoga gives me and the joy of studying again is beyond words. I am hoping to continue my yoga studies with the diploma and even beyond that, if possible.

From HMP

I am finding the 'Being still with anger' exercises very helpful and meditation is very helpful for thinking and reflecting. I feel a little more positive by doing a little meditation in the morning. I can hear the birds in the early hours, sometimes the rain.

I am still reading Peace Inside, I find it very helpful. **I know there is light at the end of the tunnel.** I am thinking of going to yoga classes once released.

From HMP Parc

Thank you for the chance to learn more with yoga, stretching and meditation. It is a joy to have in your cell and a sense of escapism. **Keeps me calm and helps me stay positive in mind, body and spirit.**

From HMP Forest Bank

I received the meditation and yoga pack with a huge smile in my heart this morning.

Receiving your package and reading through your newsletter and readers' letters has given my mind, body, soul and spirit a much-needed boost!

I wish to learn more of both to hopefully gain a mental and physical release, plus **keep my body, mind, soul and spirit in a healthier state.**

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



From HMP

I have less bad days, but when I have them, as we all do as we are human, I cope a lot better now and look at how far I have come. I take a time-out to breathe and then do a bit of meditation. I feel a lot better and positive that I cope better now.

I know it is going to be hard to do any yoga and meditation for the first few days being back in the community, as there will be lots to do and sort out. But before I go to bed I will do some meditation, then in the morning some yoga, as I try to keep to a routine, but sometimes it changes. It has helped me so much to be a more positive person and positive about life, etc. I get a lot of positives from doing a lot of meditation. Like praying, it helps me take things one step at a time.

It is like very high winds in my mind at the moment, but I am getting a lot better. Taking it slow to get to low winds and rain. **By being at one with the breath, I can have a dry day with some sun, all calm and positive to sort things out a lot better.**

From HMP

Well I have not been able to relax for a very long time and chill out as I get angry and seem to snap, but **since I have been doing meditation, I have not been snapping as much** and I seem to be sleeping better on the night.

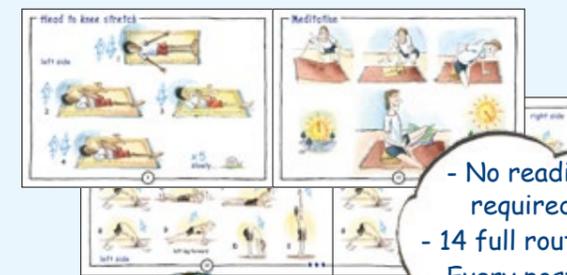
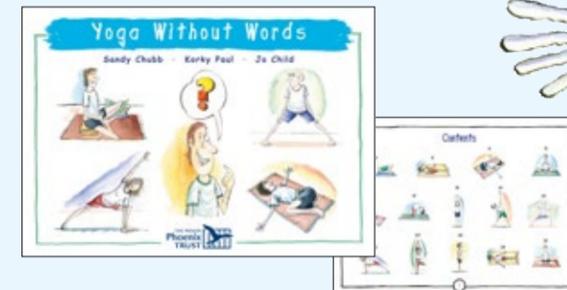


Meditation artworks: unnamed

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Mental Health Awareness Week
11th to 17th May



Yoga Challenge

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To take part, please complete and return the slip below for your set of Give it 10 practice sheets

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Give it 10 Yoga Challenge

Name _____

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Name of prison or establishment

Return to: **The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF**

From HMP

I have struggled to move forward with meditation in the last month or so. I think I am a bit afraid of what my mind says when I try to enter that quiet place. I have, at least been trying hard to be more mindful and live more in the present. I have been enjoying the colours of the maple leaves in the gardens, the smell of my compost heaps (like English breakfast tea!) and the sounds around me. This often helps, but I can be brought back to earth with a bump by the prison around me.

I have also been working hard on the principles of right thought or right action. Trying to think non-judgementally, speak more gently and with more thought about what I am saying and the way this affect the people I am talking with. I am also trying to make sure my actions are being done for the right reasons. I think these two efforts bring out the best in me.

I just have to hope that people can see me as a good person who has made a bad choice, rather than seeing me as entirely defined by that bad choice.

From HMP Frankland

Your newsletter and a DVD that were floating around a wing early in my sentence were enormously helpful and a welcome intervention, that arrived at a perfect time in my life. Over the last 6 years I have followed a nearly daily practice that has not only given me some comfort, peace and resilience, but also let me give more to the community of people I live and work with here.

Of course, I am not the only one who has had this experience and feels this way. A couple of us aim to start an informal group practice in the spring, something rewarding and suitable for beginners. It could be a positive, open, regular activity for a few on the wing. It would be great if this could succeed.

One motive is that a good culture is not just the lack of bad behaviour, but the positive presence of good.

When men do not have ready-made opportunities for excellent conduct they do not necessarily know how to start. We would like to get it right first time.

Quiet strength

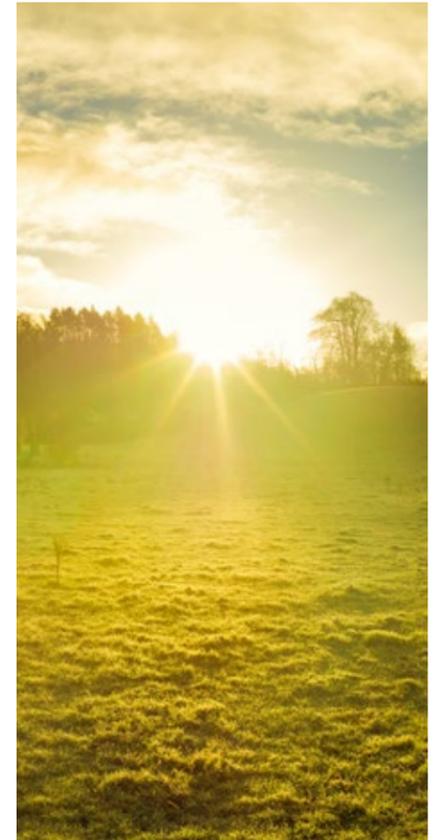
Continued from page 1

Another principle is ahimsa, kindness to yourself. Despair often turns inward, with harsh self-judgement or blame. Yoga invites you to be kinder toward yourself. You can stop harming yourself with thoughts or being stuck in unhealthy patterns.

The breath is always available, no matter the circumstances. In and out, steady and personal, it cannot be taken from you. Each breath can remind you that the present moment is yours. You can choose how to meet it. You can notice the light, even in small ways. You can respond to life differently, even when outside circumstances cannot change.

Quiet strength is not loud. It is small, patient, and steady. It is noticing despair without giving up. It is showing up for yourself one breath at a time. It is enduring without losing your humanity. Even in hopelessness, even in despair, there is a part of you that cannot be taken away. The sun will rise again. Your life can be different. The routines you follow, the breath you notice, and the kindness you show yourself all add up. This is your quiet strength. And it connects your mind, body and spirit.

For a gentle way to connect with hope in your body and mind, see the Breath of Hope practice on the back page. You can also explore the yoga Moon Sequence in the following pages, a calming flow to help regulate emotions and bring balance to your day.



Selina
Editor
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust

Top Tips **Awakening our spirit**

Yoga practice helps us to find steadiness and connection

1. Start where you are

As you breathe and move, notice how you are and silently name it

2. Let your breath be your guide

Choose to breathe slowly and steadily as you move or meditate

3. Yoga as part of daily life

You may notice you become less reactive to pressure or waiting

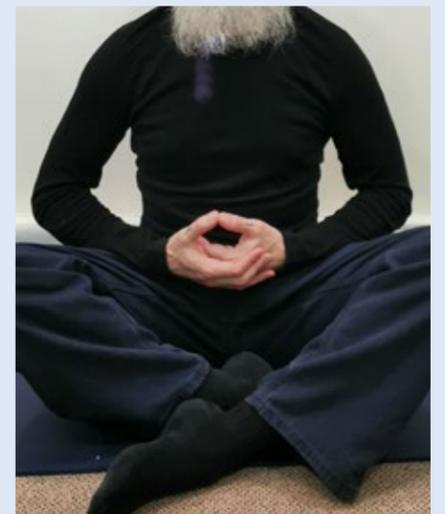
4. Keep it short, repeatable and reliable

Just 10 minutes of yoga, meditation or quiet reflection strengthens feelings of connection

5. Give yourself a break from regret and worry

You still care. It creates space for clearer thinking time

Write to a friendly mentor at **The PPT, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF** if you would like someone to share thoughts about yoga and meditation experience



Moon sequence

by Katy

- Support the body during recovery, low-energy or menstrual phases
- Encourage grounding and reflection
- Calming movement to help regulate emotions

1



Standing - touch the sky

- Feet hip distance apart
- Hands together
- Reach towards sky
- Look up

2



Half-moon side stretch

- Keep hands together
- Lean to the side
- Half-moon body shape

3



Half-moon side stretch

- Keep hands together
- Lean to the other side
- Half-moon body shape

4



Neck release

- Slowly roll ear towards shoulder
- Circle forwards to other side
- Repeat 3 times
- Relax your shoulders

5



Standing cat-cow (lift chest)

- Hands to thighs
- Lift chest towards sky
- Shoulder blades together

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

Tips

- Relax your shoulders
- Stand firmly on both feet
- Try 3 breaths in each posture

6



Standing cat-cow (arch back)

- Hands to thighs
- Arch/round back

Repeat Cat Cow sequence 5 times (numbers 5 and 6)

7



Self-hug

- Slight bend in knees
- Wrap arms around body
- Tuck head in
- Stay for a few breaths

8



Chair posture

- Light bend in knees
- Knees together
- Hands together reaching upwards
- Look towards hands

9



Forward fold

- Hands to thighs or shins
- Slight bend in knees

10



Hands to centre (standing)

- Stand tall
- Hands together at chest
- Feet hip-distance apart
- Close eyes (if comfortable)

Repeat as many times as you like to feel the rhythm of the moon



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

Breath of hope

by Izzy

- Release shoulder tension
- Energise your body
- Feel brighter and more positive
- Repeat this cycle for 3 to 5 rounds



Tips

- Check you have space to reach up and out before you begin
- You can also sit on the edge of a chair, bed or on the floor
- Keep knees slightly bent
- Take 3 breaths to settle before you start
- You can take extra breaths between each round

Cautions:

- Make smaller movements if you have a shoulder injury
- Stop if you feel dizzy or unwell and breathe naturally



P.O. Box328, Oxford OX2 7HF
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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 Elizabeth Anne Avery and Susan Kelly.