

# Small steps, big difference



**“I will not give up and will persevere. I am annoyed my setback has dented the work on meditation but will get back to where I was 100%.”**

From HMP Parc, see page 2

## Welcome

Each day letters and requests arrive, handwritten, short, long, all over the place. Every one is read and valued. There is no judgement, just an appreciation that someone has taken the trouble to write and share what is happening for them and trust yoga and meditation might help.

Some letters describe frustration, restless days, boredom or struggles with focus and hope. Others show how people are finding a new perspective on themselves, and even happiness. By moving, breathing or finding some sense of calm amidst the noise. One reader writes on page 2 how despite noticing his experience of yoga is somewhere between ‘slightly frustrating’ or ‘pretty good’, he stuck to it, so it was ‘all good really’.

What comes through is simple: starting, trying again and keeping at it are what makes a difference. There is no perfect practice, there are no sudden changes. But steady effort, day after day, brings more calm and clarity and allows people to uncover their true selves. Many find joy in nature, peeked at through the cracks or when gardening or feeding birds. Yoga and meditation are not about escaping what is happening. They are tools to meet it differently and all the small steps count.

*Selina* Editor  
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust

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## 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:



### 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*

Page 3



### Get connected

**Our team share yoga & meditation advice and support by letter**

*Get in touch to connect with a mentor who can share your yoga journey*

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### Greet the sunshine

*Heart opening sun sequence*

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# Letters

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

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



## From HMP Parc

I have been meditating a bit easier over the past 7 – 10 days, but not much easier admittedly. But as usual **I will not give up and will persevere. I am annoyed my setback has dented the work on meditation but will get back to where I was 100%.**

I have filled in the practice sheet you sent and explained the feelings were lessened and I put time on how long I tried meditation for. Sometimes I did do longer as it felt OK. The one word feeling review was difficult. I wanted to write 2 sometimes – ‘slightly frustrating’ or ‘pretty good’ but stuck to it, ha ha, so it was all good.

The Change of Air practice sheet was interesting and very easy to do. It did let go of tension in my arms, hands and shoulders. I have recently started lying on the floor and just relaxing, focusing on my breath, but now I have a spare bed in the cell I mostly lie on that (as it feels cleaner!).

## From HMP

### Here is my acronym for “Yoga”

- Y** - Yearning to be healthy
- O** - Overcoming self-doubt
- G** - Generous thinking
- A** - Awesome feeling

### Yoga’s Art for Human Heart

Yoga’s art plays a major part in my heart opening the eyes of my heart

Yoga’s art plays a major part in my heart connecting people together in one heart

Yoga’s art plays a major part in my heart connecting every heart to mum’s heart

## From HMP Ashfield

### January

I look back on my journey so far with lots of emotions but positively.

I knew meditation and yoga worked as the ‘yolk’, the effects they had on me, the balance and the calm, were undeniable. **I stuck with it. It gave me profound strength and peacefulness.** At the same time, it empowered me that although I could not articulate what was happening, I instinctively trusted it was ‘doing me good’. **It is hard to describe a feeling you have never felt before. It is like another sense I was never aware of.** I am now better at letting things be and accepting how things are.

### February

My meditation usually consists of awareness of the breath. I can centre myself quickly now. With yoga I do frog pose straight in to standing, by keeping my hands next to my toes. I do lots of spinal stretches, lots of controlled breathing. My favourites are body scan and loving kindness ‘metta’ meditations.

### I now can wholeheartedly, confidently say I have accepted things and can be myself.

I have to say I am happy. The missing kind of happiness I did not have on the outside. I had work, love, money, adventure, freedom but I did not have inner happiness. I was lost but with a combination of being stripped right down, 2 years in seg [segregation], meditation and yoga and the benefit I felt, helped me cope with the guilt of the hurt I caused, how selfish I was. I am using where I am to put all that right. Sounds corny but the quote **‘plant trees under whose shade you have no intentions to sit’** is my ethos.

I sat on a stained floor of a segregation cell for 2 years. It took its toll but it did not break me, it empowered me as I could switch off to a place where I felt true stillness and after meditation everything was put into perspective. It is a gift, a treasure to feel good from the inside out.

## From HMP Hull

### March

I have been in for over 3 years and found a few positive things to help me get through the day. I have been doing art at HMP Hull and find this a lovely way to - well - escape what is in your mind. Try to just get some pens and paper and just see what happens.

The other is to try and meditate each day. I do a breathing type, which I do in the morning. I turn all things off, find a nice place to sit and close my eyes. Think about your feet then follow up to your knees then your seat – back – shoulders – arms – hands – back – neck – head. Then concentrate on your in breath count 10 in then start again. Do this for a while then count your out breaths 10 and start again for a while. Then just breathe without counting then concentrate on how the breath feels. This may take about 15-20 mins after you have felt the breath. Come out of it slowly and open your eyes.

Now when you are meditating many things will come into your mind, put them to one side and if it gets too much start the count again.

**Do not worry if you find it difficult, there are many different meditations. Just try and try again.**



Artwork from HMP Hull

### December

I am now doing my meditation every morning. Nice routine I have found: no TV, the radio on, breakfast and coffee, then exercise, not much. 15 to 20 sit-ups, leg raises, crunches and squats, 10 to 15 lunges and 15 press-ups.

Then sit for a few minutes and then with no radio or light on I sit and have a lovely mindfulness meditation. I have found that a lot comes in and if I carry on my mind settles down. Always try for around half an hour.



## 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, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF**

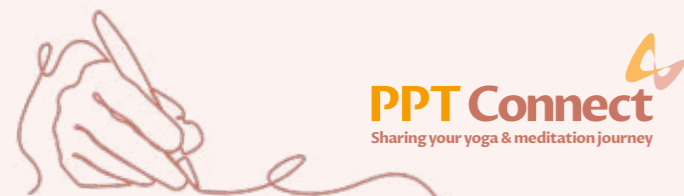
**Did you know?** The PPT offer 1-to-1 support and guidance, to those living in secure settings, who are interested in practising yoga and meditation

We call this mentoring. Our mentors share their yoga experience, advice and encouragement with you by letter

A mentor will always:

- Answer your letters
- Listen to you
- Choose resources with you in mind
- Be non-judgemental
- Offer a safe space to share your thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Try to help you on your yoga and meditation journey

**“PPT gave me a space to breathe - and a space to grow.”** Jasper, Onward Life



## Yes, I would like a mentor

Write to us or complete this slip and send to the address below

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prisoner Number \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## Nicola, Onward Life

An extract from writing during her time inside

I stand by the window and stare through the glass at a scene I have stared at for many more days than I can count. Today is a grey and wintry picture, but I have seen many seasons through my tiny window.

In spring a nearby cherry tree covered herself in pink and white frothy blossom and took centre stage until autumn, her splendour over for another year. Now while she rested, the winter wind rattled her bare branches, a sharp contrast to the stillness on my side of the glass.



Standing on a chair I crack open the tiny top window. A mere 4 inch gap appears and the wind whistles through it. I wriggle my fingers into the outside and shiver as frigid air blows through them, so I pull my hand back inside and shut the window. I stretch reaching up towards the cream ceiling, pulling muscles and sinews, holding the pose for as long as possible, before relaxing suddenly and crumpling into a slouch. I listen and still only hear the hollow quietude.

Early mornings are the best time of each day, second only to the moment when I curl in bed with sleep's silence for company, and the knowledge that each day only had to be lived once. No matter how bad the day had been, tomorrow may well be better.

I wash quickly in the tiny sink, dress in loose grey jogging pants and matching tee shirt, take a deep breath and sink to the floor. I sit in the centre of a small, brightly coloured rug that covers a few of the scuffed tiles. As I settle, I am aware of the hard cold floor I am trying to balance my bones on, the smallness of the room, the sparse grimness of it all.

## Nicola, Onward Life - continued

I pull air into my lungs until every corner is inflated, then slowly allow it to trickle from my nose as I begin my morning meditation, as I have every morning, I have been in this place. With past practice it was almost easy to empty my mind and concentrate on my breath.

My consciousness is suddenly stabbed by the ringing of a loud bell outside the door to my room. Shouts and screams and the banging of doors follow. I gently open my eyes, smile when I see my outstretched arm reaching for the sky and take another deep breath.

Another prison day has begun, but I will meet it with memories of the scent of the meadow and the warmth of the sun to help me through. I get to my feet, my door bursts open and I re-join the real world, but in a few hours the next early morning will welcome me and that thought is one of comfort.

## From HMP Glenochil

Meditation helps me to process and rationalise my situation, and it helps me to be present in the 'here and now'. I am seeing so much cruelty and poisonous behaviour that it is very difficult to stay tolerant and compassionate and I'm going to talk to the Buddhist chaplain about this.

## From HMP Millsike

I look forward to hearing what the next [PPT] challenge in May will be around. I always enjoy them, especially as the sun has usually raised its sleepy head and I enjoy practicing outdoors a whole lot more. I feel more grounded on the earth than I do on the landing. **And doing sun salutation with the rays on your face beaming down upon you takes you to a new dimension.**

## Top Tips Perseverance

Our community's tips for keeping going with meditation and yoga

1. Pull air into lungs until every corner is inflated to begin morning meditation. (Nicola, onward life)
2. Do not worry if you find it difficult. There are different options to try and try again. Sit with no radio, TV or light on. Try counting 10 breaths in and out. If you carry on your mind may settle (From HMP Hull)
3. Make it part of your daily routine (From HMP Haverigg)
4. Even if it feels 'slightly frustrating' stick to it (From HMP Parc)
5. Instinctively trust it is doing you good (From HMP Ashfield)
6. Build up the time slowly (From HMP)

## Competition

We need your help to design the 2026 and 2027 PPT festive cards

- Send us a design suitable for a winter seasonal greetings card
- Artworks should fit on A5 (half the size of this page)
- There is a small monetary prize: first prize £30, second prize £20 and third prize £10
- Please send in your entry by **Thursday 23 July**



2025 Designs from HMP Whatton and HMP Haverigg

## Card competition

Enclose this slip with your entry

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Prisoner number \_\_\_\_\_

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

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).

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

# Yoga Heart opening sun sequence

by Dilly

- Lifts spirits
- Brightens mood
- Gets body moving

## Cautions

- Practise on a non-slip surface. Clear the space around you
- If shoulder injury, raise arms to shoulder height
- Avoid locking out joints
- Avoid looking up if neck pain
- Stop if it hurts
- Speak to healthcare if you are unsure

## Tips

- Breathe 5 times in each posture
- Option to forward fold with hands rested on chair or books

*“The Master observes the world but trusts their inner vision. They allow things to come and go. Their heart is open to the sky.”*

Chapter 12 – Tao Te Ching – Lao Tzu (Stephen Mitchell Translation)

**1**



**Mountain posture**

- Hands to heart centre
- Gentle bend in knees
- Smile at the lips
- Take 5 deep breaths

**2**



**Salute the sun**

- Arms go wide
- Reach to sky
- Breathe in

**3**



**Touch the earth – forward fold**

- Breathe out
- Arms wide
- Knees bent
- Hands to floor

**4**



**Half lift to forward fold**

- Breathe in
- Hands to knees
- Extend spine
- Look forward
- Breath out: forward fold

**5**



**Reach the sky & re-set**

- Breathe in - arms to sky
- Root through feet to stand
- Breathe out - hands to centre

**Repeat postures 1 to 5 3 times**

**6**



**Spinal rotation**

- Fold forward
- Hold one ankle, reach opposite hand to sky
- Bend through knees
- Change sides
- Repeat 1 to 5 times

**7**



**Sun salute lunge 1**

- Hands to floor
- Step one leg back
- Bend front knee
- Raise arms to sky

**8**



**Touch the earth – forward fold**

- Hands to floor
- Step feet together
- Bend knees
- Head heavy

**9**



**Sun salute lunge 2**

- Step other leg back
- Bend front knee
- Arms to sky
- Hands to floor
- Forward fold

**10**



**Reach the sky & re-set**

- Breathe in - arms to sky
- Root through feet to stand
- Breathe out - arms to centre
- Smile at the lips
- Take 5 deep breaths

**insidetime**  
the National Newspaper for Prisoners & Detainees

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

# Overwhelmed? Try this

by Selina

- Quieten the noise in your head
- Release tension in lower back, shoulders and stomach
- Feel supported

*“And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow”*

WB Yeats  
from The Lake Isle of Inishfree



Face both sides equal amounts

**3 mins**

Use bedding and clothing for support

Use enough padding to fully support upper body

Have knees apart

**Keep breathing slowly and steadily**

### Tips:

- Stay around 3 minutes on each side
- Keep breathing slowly and steadily

### Cautions:

- Use padding to protect knees, ankles and feet
- If side head position uncomfortable, rest forehead down
- Do not practise if you have a chronic back condition or are pregnant



P.O. Box328, Oxford OX2 7HF  
[www.theppt.org.uk](http://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 James Marriott.*