

Belonging



Welcome

In your letters it is a joy to see the many different ways yoga is lived in everyday life. Some readers describe finding moments of peace for the first time. Others write about growing confidence, better relationships or discovering a new sense of purpose and skill. However different stories are, they all remind us that every one of us carries far more within us than we may yet have discovered.

Yoga teaches us to return, again and again, to the present moment with patience and kindness. A reader, writing from HMP Haverigg, describes finding a reassurance through practice that he had never experienced before. Another reader shares how reading *Peace Inside* helped them realise they were not alone, giving hope during a difficult time. Someone writing from HMP Foston Hall, reminds us that yoga meets us where we are, adapting her practice from a wheelchair while discovering a community of people wanting to share and help one another. Twenty years after leaving prison, one reader still draws on the breathing techniques he learned and that one thing we can all do is check on each other.

Together, these stories remind us that yoga is not simply something we do. It is a way of discovering the steadiness, kindness and wisdom that already live within each of us.

Selina Editor
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust

“I came across the idea of the “4 Rs”. They seem such a good way to make a negative action into a positive outcome.”

Discover the 4 Rs on page 4

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:

Freeing the Spirit

A light read. 16 postures, each one illustrated
Meditation guidance

Order your FREE copy
Page 3



Competition Winners

The PPT festive cards are here

2 great designs available to order now
Page 4

Better Balance

Tree posture

Quieten your mind by calming your body
Page 8



Letters

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

From HMP Foston Hall

June

I have just been introduced to you by the chaplaincy as I was asking some questions about meditating. I have enjoyed the 'yoga for inner light' in the winter 2025 edition. I would like to try and calm and ground my mind and if possible increase my mobility.

I have not been able to do yoga for approximately 10 years as my health declined. I am now lighter, use a wheelchair and was looking at the postures thinking what I could do sat in my wheelchair or how they could be adapted.

I have never really managed to meditate and focus on my breath etc as my mind has wandered. I am hoping the Freedom Inside CD will help me focus.

July

I am trying to find time each day and it does seem to be helping me deal with anytime I feel overwhelmed emotionally – but I still need lots more practice at this!

I especially loved reading the summer newsletter, knowing that there are other people like me out there wanting to share and help each other.

I adapt any postures where you would need to stand or lay on the floor, to sitting in a chair / wheelchair and laying on my bed. Some of them I struggle with so I am writing in for a PPT mentor, as that could be someone to run ideas past and talk to about meditation further as well.

The quality of resources you offer makes me feel really thought about, cared for and my growth and journey invested in.

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



From HMP

December

I was able to run the first trial meditation session last Sunday. It was a good trial run for 3 people and I have taken notes on how to improve going forward. It was suggested that we start with some yoga and or stretches before the guided meditation.

I hope to grow the group to 6 – 10 people max and have a fixed Sunday morning slot to run them, with the hope that people will also practise in their cells on the other days. It is not always easy to get the focus, mindset or calmness to actually sit and meditate here. So many distractions, noises and 'reasons' to be angry yet I try to surrender to the day, to the events of the day and just be. Go with the flow.

March

A lot has happened to me since my letters and I can honestly say that my daily meditation is one of the few things that has kept me alive.

I moved to another wing, was placed on an ACCT, having multiple checks, and stopped talking and interacting with everyone. Being back to 23 hour lock up and really mentally unable to go out during the 1 hour, I basically spent 24 hours a day in my cell alone.

Being able to have a daily routine of meditation saved me. Whilst previously I was comfortable with 30-45 minute silent meditation, I struggled to be able to do so for a minute. Yet I continued to do so, both alone and whilst on the phone with my partner. Even in silence, being able to share my meditation with my partner helped me to refocus, recentre and open my eyes again to life. I now continue to grow slowly, meditating for 10-15 minutes. I have also started to do some of the yoga movements and breathing sequences.

Before moving wings, my weekly meditation group was successful with a long waiting list of people wishing to join and requests for some more groups.

I now focus on my own wellbeing and mental health. It has been a learning for me, to go from someone who dedicated significant time to helping others, to just focusing on helping myself. I am awaiting transfer to a Cat C prison. I hope that when I eventually move and settle, I will be able to increase my yoga and meditation.



From HMP Wymott

April

I am doing some of the breathing exercises that you sent me, especially when feeling upset or anxious and stressed. The days are getting longer and warmer and it is heartening to see the trees turning green.

May

I am doing my best to battle on as best as I can under the circumstances, despite my numerous serious health issues, lack of sleep and constant pain. I 100% enjoy listening to the CD Freedom Inside and doing what exercises I am able to. I am listening on a regular basis. Even though I cannot do all the exercises it does make a difference, listening to the CD as often as possible to build up a sense of inner calm.



From HMP Haverigg

Meditation became part of my daily routine at approximately the same time as art and education at HMP Armley. My first night was very difficult and lots of noise. An officer gave me paper and pencils and I survived by spending all night drawing, something I had not done since I was a child.

After getting education and art back in to my life I wanted to complete my days with something that was calming and that is where meditation came in. These all were a complete new outlook which filled my days – boredom has been a constant problem and these became my distraction, as well as being able to combat my feelings of anxiety and inferiority.

I try to meditate 3 times a day and find the sessions on NPR [National Prison Radio] helpful, especially as someone talks along and is encouraging.

We have a field with a variety of wildlife so I am going to give the rabbits and robins some bread.

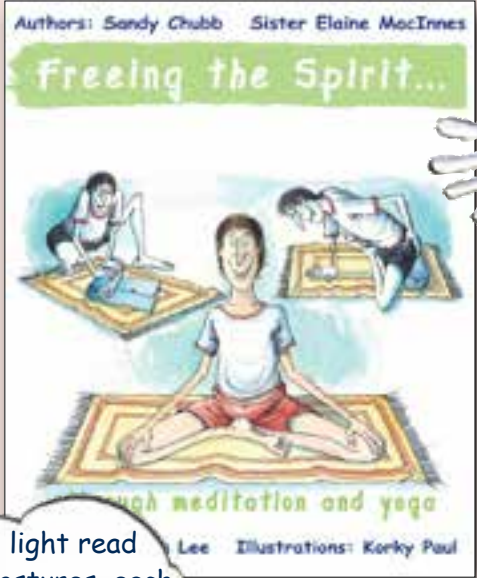
March

It is nice to see some sun at last and feel the days getting warmer although the news from around the world is not good. All we can do is live decently and do whatever good we can.



The sequel to Yoga Without Words
Order your own **FREE** copy

Freeing the Spirit...
...through meditation and yoga



Authors: Sandy Chubb Sister Elaine MacInnes

Freeing the Spirit...

...through meditation and yoga

Lee Illustrations: Korky Paul

- A light read
- 16 postures, each one illustrated
- Meditation guidance



Freeing the Spirit
Order your own **FREE** copy

Name _____

Prisoner Number (if in custody) _____

Job Title (if staff) _____

Name of prison or establishment _____

☐ Tick if you would like to receive this newsletter - it's FREE

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

Festive Cards

Congratulations to our festive card winners Alfred and James

Order online at: bit.ly/PPTCards



1st place
Alfred, HMP



2nd place
James, HMP

Or by post with
the slip below...

Festive card order

Please send me ☐ packs of 10 cards (5 of each design) at £7 per pack, including postage

☐ I enclose a cheque for £ _____ payable to The Prison Phoenix Trust

☐ I will ask my prison finance department to send £ _____ payable to The Prison Phoenix Trust

Name _____

Prisoner Number (if in custody) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

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



Onward Life

From HMP

February

I have been feverishly wondering how I can try to correct the balance and reduce the harm I have caused. I owe it to those I hurt to try to better myself and make things as right as I can.

I came across the idea of the "4 Rs". It really resonated with me. They seem such a good way to make a negative action into a positive outcome – I briefly note them below:

Regret Sincerely regretting the negative action and wanting to learn from it

Resolve Resolving never to repeat the negative action

Refuge Taking refuge in beliefs, communities and other institutions to help keep you accountable

Remedy Trying to do something to counter the negative effects of your actions

March

Meditation has definitely been worth its weight in gold recently. Having been promised a progressive move to a Cat D 6 months ago, I was told further assessments were wanted. To begin with I was livid, but once I had had a bit of time to process, I just thought: "Why am I going to let the actions of others undo the hard work I have done over the last 2 years?" After that I just let it go, thought about constructive actions I could take and meditated to keep emotions and thoughts in control.

It seems to have worked so far! I have just focused on my time in the gardens, planting the veg garden, sorting the new seeds and as always listening to the rain on the greenhouse roof.

Onward Life

March

I thought it only right that I wrote you a short letter for your continued support in the way of newsletters since I left prison 20 YEARS ago! Yes, you read that right, the skills you taught me in my 2-year incarceration I have carried with me for the past 20 years. I think people need to know how important the work that you do is.

Techniques like staying calm through breathing can help so much in dealing with confrontation and not retaliating and keeping your anger in check. This is especially so in people with anger issues.

Needless to say I have not returned to prison since 2008.

May

If only

If only you do one thing today

Just make a call to someone and say

Is everything fine. Can I help in any way

Most, if not all, will tell you all is well

But is this really the case or are they going through hell

Are they suffering in silence and feel there is nothing to gain

If only there was a pill to silence their pain

If only it was that easy

We would all be set free

But life is not like that, unfortunately

One thing we can all do is check on each other.

Whether it is one of your friends, neighbour, or brother

So, if you only remember to do one thing each day

Pick up the phone, make a call and just say...



From MHP Kilnarnock

Top Tips

Bringing yoga into daily life

1. Pause and notice one conscious breath Coming in and going out

2. Create a small daily routine Build on a few minutes of stretching, breathing and stillness to create more space for calm, clarity and wiser choices

3. Check your posture throughout the day Can you soften your shoulders, lengthen your spine and feel your feet on the ground

4. Practise tree posture whilst waiting See back page. Notice your own balance, patience and strength



Onward Life

Extract from 'Do the meditation rock', by Alan Ginsberg (courtesy of Joe, Onward Life)

If you want to learn	how to meditate
I'll tell you now	'cause it's never too late
I'll tell you how	'cause it can't wait
It's just that great	that it's never too late
If you are an old	fraud like me
Or a lama who lives	in Eternity
The first thing you do	when you meditate
Is keep your spine	your backbone straight
Sit yourself down	on a pillow on the ground
Or sit in a chair	if the ground isn't there
Do the meditation	Do the meditation
Learn a little Patience and Generosity	

Seated chair yoga

by Dervla

● Releases tension

● Energises body

● Self-care

1



Heart-belly breath

- Feet on floor
- One hand to heart
- One hand on belly
- Take 5 slow steady breaths into belly

2



Face and jaw massage

- Massage face and jaw
- Use your fingertips
- Small gentle circles for as long as you like

3



Leg and foot massage (left)

- Left foot to right upper leg
- Gently tap or massage left leg and foot
- Keep both feet on floor if any discomfort

4



Leg and foot massage (right)

- Right foot to left upper leg
- Gently tap or massage right leg and foot
- Keep both feet on floor if any discomfort

5



Active seated mountain

- Arms out to sides
- Arms and hands stretching
- Take 3 breaths

Cautions

- In 3 and 4 only bring foot to upper leg if knee feels comfortable. Move from hip not knee
- Stop if it hurts
- Speak to healthcare if you are unsure

Tips

- Sit tall with back away from chair
- Put books or pillows under feet if they do not rest easily on the floor
- Take slow steady breaths in and out
- Move with awareness. Each time you change position, can you notice what you feel in your body?

6



Chest opener

- Interlace fingers behind back, or clasp side of chair
- Raise chin, eyes to the sky
- Raise hands up
- Take 3 breaths

7



Goddess posture

- Feet a bit further apart
- Toes pointed out
- Arms raised
- Take 3 breaths

8



Goddess twist (left)

- Breathing out, gently twist to the left
- Twist from the upper back
- Return to face forward
- Take 3 breaths

9



Goddess twist (right)

- Breathing out, gently twist to the right
- Twist from the upper back
- Return to face forward
- Take 3 breaths

10



Hands to heart centre

- Both hands to heart, left over right
- Take 5 slow steady breaths

Repeat postures 5 to 9, 1 breath per posture, up to 3 times if you would like a more active practice

insidetime
The National Newspaper for Prisoners & Detainees

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

*“The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe.
The heavens and the earth are there, the sun, and the moon, and the stars;
fire and lightning and winds are there; and all that now is and all that is not”*

Indian ancient text, Chandogya Upanishad 8.1. Translated by Juan Mascaró (1965)

Tree posture

by Selina

- Balance sturdy strength with flexibility
- Quieten your mind by calming your body
- Open up to connection

Tips

- Put your toe down to steady yourself
- Engage core muscles to help you balance
- Accept that sometimes we feel wobbly
- Relax your face to relax your mind and your body
- Keep breathing slowly and steadily



Posture 1

- Feel feet on the ground. Wiggle toes
- Look softly straight ahead
- Hands together
- Engage core & balance with toe on ground
- Hold for 3 long slow steady breaths if you can

What do you notice

- physically and emotionally?
- is different between hands together and hands raised?
- helps you balance?



Posture 2

- OR balance foot against lower leg or inner thigh

Write to us at The PPT and let us know your experience of practising tree posture, or for more guidance and a dedicated mentor to write to you.

“Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

John Muir (1838-1914) Scottish born naturalist & writer



Posture 3

- Raise arms to the sky
- Lift up to the light and expand awareness
- Hold for 3 long slow steady breaths if you can
- **Plant both feet on the ground & SWAP SIDES**