THE PRISON Phoenix TRUST

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www.theppt.org.uk

Hope and healing through meditation and yoga

Newsletter Winter 2026

New journeys: perhaps I can, too



> ***"For me yoga has started to turn my life around and has been an integral part of staying clean from drugs for over a year now."***
>
> From HMP Manchester, see page 2

Welcome

Discovering something helpful can open new possibilities. Sometimes, the simplest things can make a difference: one conscious breath, a few moments of stillness, a little patience with yourself on a difficult day. We are reminded that feeling safe is the foundation of belonging.

One reader found his way back to breathing, yoga and meditation after difficult setbacks. Another, once sceptical of yoga, now describes it as vital to his recovery from addiction and rebuilding his relationship with his daughters. "Simple yet highly effective," he writes. A contributor from HMP Manchester persevered with yoga despite the chaos of prison and now shares its benefits with others.

These are not stories of lives without darkness. They are stories of discovering that darkness does not have to be the whole story. Even when life feels overwhelming, we can begin again, just as we are.

This time of year can feel particularly hard. We do not need to pretend everything is fine. Perhaps peace begins with a little space to breathe and meet the moment with kindness. Perhaps, as you read these letters, you will find yourself thinking *perhaps I can, too.*

Wherever you are this winter, may you discover moments of genuine peace, unexpected joy and the possibility of new beginnings.

Editor
CEO, The Prison Phoenix Trust

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:

DVD 1 - Time Out Inside



Yoga & Meditation Toolkit

of practice advice
Page 3

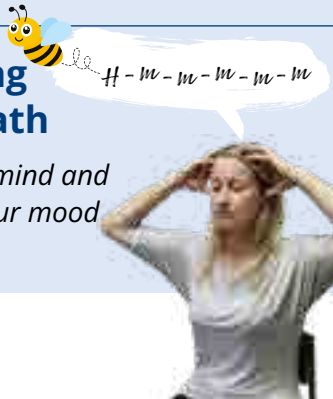
Seasons Greetings



Festive cards selling fast!

2 great designs
Page 4

Humming Bee Breath



Calms your mind and improves your mood
Page 8

Letters

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

From HMP Eastwood Park

I enjoyed the article on belonging in the autumn issue. I would like to comment that belonging as a concept starts with a person feeling safe enough to even try to belong. Something I know a lot about. **When I first came to prison I had been isolated for many years. Belonging starts with you.**

I would also like to wish all at The PPT and its readers a happy festive season. Take care all.



Artwork from HMP Portland

From HMP Manchester

The PPT has gone above and beyond for us in providing a huge range of material which is broadening our practice. We are all extremely grateful for your assistance and encouragement so far.

I thought I would tell you a little more about myself and how, and why, yoga has helped so much over my time in prison so far.

I was a drug user for over 30 years and this is my first time in prison with a lengthy sentence. My lifestyle led to mental and physical difficulties and I was at my lowest point possible, at the start of my sentence 3 years ago.

I remember, Jo, the chaplain here, recommending yoga, so I signed up for your free newsletter. I found the stories of hope and peace from other prisoners intriguing and decided to give it a go myself. Initially practice was difficult in such a chaotic environment, but I persevered.

One day I was simply meditating, checking my posture and a wave of what I can only describe as positive energy ran through me. And a pain and stiffness I had had in my neck for many years just disappeared. Truly I thought it was magical! I was now hooked and wanted to learn more.

I got all the books available in our vast library and began studying. At the time I was also looking through the Prison Education Trust courses available and found a GCSE in 'beginners yoga' with the BSY British School of Yoga. I was accepted on the course and was feeling suddenly positive about the possibilities ahead.

I began practising daily in my room, which although small is possible. I was self-conscious at first. I had comments like ' you can not do yoga in prison. It is for girls.' I was not discouraged. Eventually I wanted more space to practise and bought a yoga mat and plucked up the courage to take it to the gym room. **Some people would mock me but more were interested in what I was doing. I noticed how much calmer I was!** I was not reacting to the negative comments like I once would have.

With more people showing interest, our s/o stepped in and provided enough equipment for us to start a group practice. This has now grown further and has had to be split into 2 groups☺

It has been an absolute joy to share what I have learnt with others and hear from them what benefits they are feeling. From bad backs feeling better, to a better state of mind for others. It is such a diverse group and I am so glad to see how involved and engaged every one of them has been. It gives me an enormous boost preparing a session and I look forward to every weekend we spend together. I only wish we could do more together but many of them do their own sessions in their rooms too.

For me personally, yoga has started to turn my life around and has been an integral part of staying clean from drugs for over a year now.

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

Shannon Trust

From HMP Portland

May

I am so grateful due to being able to reach out for help for the 1st time, when everything is difficult and that light at the end of tunnel is not in sight. The *Freeing the Spirit* book is beyond beneficial for me! I've always made fun of others who do yoga and meditation. Wow I have been missing out.

July

Yoga is a MASSIVE part of my recovery from addiction. Simple yet highly effective.

I would love others to read the 180 degree turn around from being anti everything to trying it – knowing I have nothing to lose; but so much to gain. If I am now recommending this kind of thing to others, you know it is working. If he can, I can.

It has kept me sober and in turn helped me re-build a fractured relationship with my 2 girls.

September

I do 3 letters every day - I to mum and 2 for my girls. My mum is proud of me for the first time in years.

When I get out I am going to try and go in to schools and the like to steer young ones away from drugs by telling my life stories as a person who has been in real dark places and has come out the other side.

You are all making a difference, so never stop shining.

From HMP Channings Wood

April

I am being released tomorrow! I just wanted to let you know that I got to attend a yoga session here. I have given a lot of the resources you have sent me away as **I am a big yoga evangelist and encourage anyone who will listen to at least breathe and stretch in their cells.**

I will most definitely be continuing my yoga journey outside. This sentence is the longest I have gone in my adult life without medication or self-medicating for my ADHD. I have also lowered my resting heart rate from mid 90s to low 70s. I put a lot of that down to not just the yoga sessions but applying what I have learnt in my day-to-day life. Mindfulness is so important.

I have encouraged others to write to you too. It is nice to get letters and even nicer that you care and want to support us.

From never doing yoga before in my life, I am now a proper yogi. I can not wait to buy some 'parachute pants' and go to my 1st class somewhere.

THE PRISON Phoenix TRUST

Get Started

DVD 1 - Time Out Inside

Yoga & Meditation Toolkit



1. General yoga and mediation
2. Relax, breathe and meditate
3. Yoga and realaxation on floor or bed
4. Relaxation lying down
5. Seated meditation

1.5 hours of practice advice

If you would like to try **DVD 1** please complete and return the slip below

DVD 1 - Time Out Inside

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, PO Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF**

Quick order online

Festive Cards

Available to order now

Online at: bit.ly/PPTCards





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**



Artwork from HMP New Hall

From HMP Altcourse

The newsletter, your words, exercises and tips continue to give me the encouragement and guidance I need through the peaks and troughs of life.

I am persevering in the breathing and positional exercises albeit some weeks more than others. I am also continuing to "spread the word" all through the prison to both inmates and staff.

Our long-suffering but dedicated PPT yoga teacher is still doing her best and we also have a new meditation lady who we have had the pleasure of 1 session with but the promise of more to come.

Both continue to help and provide a certain reassurance I have never felt before.

So it is at this point that I feel like I would like to give something back.

Thank you for the new journeys and emotions I have experienced over the last few months.



Artwork from HMP Haverigg

From HMP

I am halfway through a very short sentence. I served a sentence before. My mental state was in a bad way and I was not expecting to cope at all at the beginning of my sentence. I have suffered miserably all my life really. I stumbled across a copy of *Peace Inside* and just had this feeling this book was going to help me. **I went from mindlessly pacing my cell to starting to bring some awareness to my walking.** It took time but the breathing techniques, simple yoga and seated Zen meditation slowly started to take effect. **I went from severe mood swings to thriving inside. I done really well.**

However, I was not aware of the disease of addiction on release and went back to drugs. I never thought I would become unwell ever again. I stopped doing what was working and zapped my spiritual energy.

5 years down the line I am back on the path. It never truly left. The 2 books that transformed my life were *Peace Inside* and *We're all doing time*. I found them here.

The simple mindful breathing has now advanced to chakra cleansing pranayama. My simple yoga practice is deepening nicely. Meditation is a constant gentle returning my awareness to my breath. And I have ADHD so my mind really does wander!



Artwork from HMP Downview

I read Ekhart Tolle's book *Stillness Speaks* and stay mindful the majority of the time. Accepting there are some things I cannot accept, accepting sometimes I don't know. I really benefit from these books from The PPT and other people's stories.

I have a hard time dealing with people and I have made myself vulnerable. I have decided to ditch the TV, my phone and kind of isolate, so I do not leave my cell and it is causing much attention. It could be a terrifying experience without the spiritual toolkit I have acquired. Instead, everything is just as it should be. I can experience the ever-flowing present moment. Time flies and there are zero distractions now with no TV.

This time on release I will keep up this practice as stepping away from a great spiritual state to heroin addiction again would make me suffer terribly. I see how simple it is. This stuff really works. I can return.

Stay grounded and much love.

Top Tips Finding breathing space

Environment too cramped, noisy and chaotic for yoga and meditation?

Try these:

1. Yoga in bed (sequence on page 6 & 7)
2. Humming bee breath creates inner calm, whatever the noise outside (back page)
3. Mindful walking as you move around the building (write in for guidance)
4. Meditate in the quiet of the night
5. Take 5 slow steady breaths of fresh air when you get outside



Yoga

Morning stretches

by Chris

- **Start your day with yoga before you have even got out of bed**
- **Stretch out any aches and pains**
- **Begin your day in a positive mood**

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

John 1:5, The Bible

1
Semi supine

- Lie on back with knees bent, feet hip-width apart
- Take 5 slow steady breaths



2
Semi supine twist

- Gently rock knees from side to side
- Notice feelings in your sides and lower back
- Keep breathing in and out steadily



3
Knee hug

- Hug knees into chest
- Lift head slightly off bed
- Notice your back rounding



4
Long stetch

- Reach arms overhead and straighten legs
- Push away through heels
- Notice feelings in back of body



5
Knee hug to long stetch reps

- Repeat knee hug to long stretch 5 or 6 times



6
Hip opener

- Lie with knees bent, feet hip-width apart
- Cross right ankle onto left knee



7
Hip opener (optional)

- Reach through with hands to draw left thigh into body
- Take 5 breaths
- **Repeat with left ankle on right knee**



8
Stranded beetle

- Still lying on bed
- Raise arms and legs in air
- Give them a playful shake



9
Side stretch

- Sit on edge of bed
- Plant feet on floor
- Place one hand on back of head
- Lift elbow up to stretch side of body
- Repeat with other side



10
Seated breath

- Rest hands on lap
- Eyes half closed or soft gaze down
- Take 10 breaths
- Notice the natural rise and fall of the breath in your body
- Gently choose a quality to take into your day



insidetime

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

Cautions

- Go gently – no pain
- Speak to healthcare if you are unsure

Tips

- Lie on top of your bedding
- Use a thin pillow under your head
- Take your time and breathe freely and steadily
- Be curious – how do you feel this morning?

Humming bee breath

by Chris

- **Naturally calm your mind**
- **Soothe your nervous system**
- **Bring your focus to the present moment**
- **Let go of tension and improve your mood**



Press on the front of your ears

- **Breathe in normally, through the nose if you can, through the mouth if you need to**
- **Breathe out with the lips closed, making a humming sound**
- **Repeat for a few minutes until you feel more calm and at ease**



Or fingers on your ears

"You can choose to be your in-breath and out-breath... and in some way be at one with the rain or the wind."

Thich Nhat Hanh, Zen monk and author. *Silence: The power of quiet in a world full of noise.*

Tips:

- Covering the ears can help to focus on the sound vibrations
- You can also practise sitting, standing, lying down or in movement
- Practising with others can make it more powerful and fun

Cautions:

- This simple breath may seriously change your energy and mood
  If anything feels too much, stop, breathe normally and do some walking meditation
- If practising near others, be sensitive not to disturb them

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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, Mr. E. Power, Ann Elizabeth Lewis & Susan Kelly.

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