

**The
Prison Phoenix Trust**

Letter Writer's Manual



P.O. Box 328, Oxford OX2 7HF

Tel: (01865) 512521 & 512522

www.prisonphoenixtrust.org.uk

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Cover picture: A picture of Gary Broderick writing to the PPT, drawn by his cell-mate

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for being willing to write to prisoners on behalf of the Prison Phoenix Trust. We are absolutely delighted to welcome you to our team. The Trust's greatest treasure is our volunteers, and we appreciate in full the wonderful work our volunteers do.

This manual is intended to help new volunteers feel clear and confident about their work with prisoners. It was put together as a result of volunteer problems and suggestions arising from volunteer meetings over the years. Please offer suggestions about how it can be made more helpful. We add to it all the time.

WHAT THE WORK IS ABOUT

(Extracts from *Nor Iron Bars* by Sister Elaine MacInnes and our Prisoners' Leaflet)

"We must be one of the few outfits you'll ever come across which believes that prison can be a golden opportunity. Sound crazy? Maybe, but think how many people choose to go on retreat, to places just like prison, where small bare rooms, isolated from friends and families, give them a chance to find out just who they really are.

We know from 10 years of experience with inmates that they are often able to turn their lives around, precisely through their own forced solitary confinement, if they see their time as a golden opportunity to practise the disciplines of meditation and yoga. We see evidence daily that prison can be a place to find inner freedom, even behind locked doors.

Since our disciplines are spiritual, they deal with the sacred. This does not mean that we promote any special religion. Indeed, we work with people of any religion or of none. Most people do acknowledge that there exists an inner Power which is our very life-ing, and even though it is unusual to discuss this life-ing in everyday doings, prisoners are remarkably free of such inhibitions and respond eagerly to even the most tentative of invitations to look within.

Living in today's world, whether inside or outside, none of us are strangers to tension. But prisons are especially tense places. We have teachers in about 85 prisons at the moment, who can help you with some yoga stretching exercises which will release the tension. And then you will be instructed in a simple silent meditation practice, which first of all cleans up some of the garbage we carry around, and eventually, leads to a peace which is very satisfying.

Even if you are banged up 3 or 4 in a cell, you can practise privately and anonymously. In prisons all over the country, men and women say the best part of the day is in the early morning, when they set their watch alarms for dawn, and practise their meditation before anyone else awakens, just by sitting on a rolled up blanket on their beds...."

Silence is at the heart of all religions; its power is transcendent. The experience of the PPT is that prisoners can become meditators, since this practice is open to any human being. Yoga offers an effective way of opening a person to this, through its physical, mental and ultimately 'silent' discipline.

The Prison Phoenix Trust is not a befriending service. We are not attempting to rehabilitate prisoners or provide a service akin to complementary medicine or therapy.

We are not equipped to offer advice or counselling. Our work is to help prisoners to awaken to what is there within us all - the sacred. Prisoners have that unique opportunity to discover their true inner nature, to be more truly who they are, which is immeasurable. Meditation and yoga can bring prisoners to spiritual awareness, and prisoners approaching the Trust want nothing less. Although prisoners often write about ordinary everyday matters and the language they use ranges from the banal to the violent, make no mistake, they come looking for a transcendent experience, for real change. Our job is to give them loving, relevant support and encourage them on their journey.

WHO ARE PRISONERS?

We all break the law. Prisoners are people who are convicted for doing so. Almost invariably they are from poor backgrounds, and many have suffered abuse in childhood. A considerable proportion, (perhaps 60%), have mental disorders. Prisoners are social outcasts.

Conditions in prison are harsh and dehumanising. Many prisoners are abandoned by their family and friends and have little, if any contact, with the outside world. They have negligible support. Society shuns them. Letters can be a real lifeline to them.

Bo Lozoff says that we are all doing time - we are all in our own private prisons. We have our dirt, people in prison have theirs. Silence can be simply the best gift to offer prisoners to help them feel normal. Silence is refreshing and cleansing and it can help us heal.

Prisoners also desire to find out who they are. The hope of the Prison Phoenix Trust is to recognise that prisoners have a unique opportunity to do just that.

MEDITATION

It is the experience of The Prison Phoenix Trust, based on 15 years of offering meditation to prisoners, that silent mind meditation, which focuses on the breath and which uses no object, is a most appropriate offering to prisoners. We need to know that meditation is safe because we usually never meet the meditators we are writing to as friends. We can give direction but how it is followed is not in our hands. Silent mind meditation is safe.

The Trust does not offer meditation for relaxation, or for reduction of tension. We accept these disciplines for one reason only - the experience of the sacred within. To find out who we are. We understand the sacred is unseen, unspoken, unnameable, and confident that the power of the sacred always acts appropriately. We have to be clear about not offering an "object" to meditators but to have faith that through silence, their journeys are fully supported by the universal power which links us all.

There are many types of meditation, and the word means different things to different people. Many people practice a Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or different religious meditation, finding this rich and beneficial. Pictures, phrases or mantras are fine if your teacher or priest is there to guide you through it. But images in the mind are potentially dynamite when working with people who may suffer from personality disorders, or an addictive or sex offending history. For instance, if you suggest an

“object” for a sex offender to meditate on it can be turned around inappropriately. Silence has been found both safe - and transforming.

If we learn that a prisoner is already practising a different form of meditation, or engages in a religious practice or spiritual discipline, we do not suggest that they are wrong or should change. We rejoice in that richness and encourage them in their discovery. We may like to suggest they also try a silent meditation, perhaps at the beginning or end of their practice, always being careful not to diminish the value of their own practice. If they make it clear that their own practice is fully satisfying or feels preferable to sitting in silence, encourage them fully in their practice.

WRITING YOUR FIRST LETTER

CHECKLIST

- check that your letter actively supports your prisoner in his or her spiritual life
- have you clarified meditation practice yet again and reminded about the breath?
- remember - no proselytising!
- don't admonish, or criticise
- don't give out your personal information
- don't send gifts
- will your prisoner feel better, even if you directed him or her to face a problem?

1. YOUR PRACTICE

Prisoners usually begin their correspondence with us in response to the spiritual practice they have begun, or wish to learn more about. We ask that our volunteer letter writers are in a regular discipline of meditation, without which volunteers cannot guide and support a prisoner in their own practice.

Writing to a prisoner is also a spiritual practice.

2. WHAT TO SAY?

It will be ideal, if possible, if you take some minutes of silence before replying to your prisoner's letter. Read the letter twice, and reflect for five minutes. Identify the major point, or a maximum of three points you wish to address. What is reaching out from the letter? Keep words to a minimum, and ask of every phrase you write; "Is this helpful?"

If you are having a struggle finding the right words, or feel uncertain about your response, don't post it off immediately. You may be clearer the next day. Don't hesitate to try out a draft reply with a fellow volunteer or member of PPT staff.

For new volunteers, our custom is for a member of staff to read your first few letters. This helps us establish that we are on the same wavelength, and can be enormously helpful. It is a bit of a shock to be guided in how to write a letter! Luckily all our new volunteers, once over the shock, say they have found it helpful.

3. AM I UP TO IT?

You may have feelings of inadequacy, wondering if you are up to the task. If so, you are in the best possible company. Join the club! It is tempting to imagine that PPT staff have the key and you are letting the Trust down. You may feel a fraud, leading a prisoner to assume you are a wise, enlightened person, when you feel you are not.

Well, no one is better than YOU. There is no set formula, no perfect letter. Don't feel inhibited or overawed; to do this work well, we have to be just who we are. Your letter will come out best when you feel completely natural, friendly and warm. When you have finished it, read it over and ask - is this the sort of letter I would like to receive?

You may also feel, (or be told by the prisoner), that unless you have been in prison, unless you have taken drugs, unless you were abused, you do not understand. There may be some truth in this, but we are not there to share of **our** experience but to encourage and support prisoners on their journey. Your gift will be your own unique and special style. By the way, all of the guidance in this manual is just by way of suggestions - please treat it as such!

Some of you write your letters in the office, some from home. Both have advantages and disadvantages. If you are writing from home, do not feel that this is in any sense second best. It will be important for you to visit the office every now and again. You are also encouraged to use the address list to contact and visit fellow volunteers. It helps to be reminded that you are part of a strong and wonderful team of people – just like you.

4. WHAT WE ARE OFFERING

Our role is of companion, guide, offering some techniques we know intimately and experience in practice every day. Quiet body, quiet mind. That is our gift. The simpler we express it the better. Gently encourage the prisoner to practice every day. Inmates are usually tense, which expresses itself in a rigid body... an inappropriate vessel for meditation. So we suggest that you frequently mention in your letters that meditation is helped by simple breathing and stretching exercises. Our book *Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga* suggests some basic postures that can be practised in the absence of a teacher.

We can only really help those who are open to the possibility of a spiritual discipline and want to try to practise it. Is this reaching for the sky? John, an ex-prisoner writes:

“.....the majority of people in prison use their cells as a spiritual retreat. Many would never admit it, but once the door is locked, virtually every single one seeks solace from their own understanding of Higher Power. Solitude can be a gateway to the Soul.

I remember once, in Wormwood Scrubs, I was working as a landing cleaner and used to take the tea round at supertime. Something I noticed as I went from cell to cell giving people their tea: nearly every cell had an improvised shrine area. It could be an image of Jesus, or Buddha or a Hindu god, a Tantric mandala, a crucifix, a rosary, Muslim calligraphy, personally drawn or painted icons. All sorts, but all depicting, in a bewildering array, the many facets of God, or Higher Power. The common theme was Faith. Everyone had faith. Burning faith. It is harder to come across outside of prison.....”

5. CUT OUT "I"

The prisoner is centre stage, not us. The "I" and "me" focus is on the prisoner. In a sense it doesn't really matter which of us volunteers is writing to the prisoner. In this work we are completely unimportant as a personality called Jason or Jean or Jane. We are just a faceless heart simply offering our love to the prisoner.

It is difficult leaving "I" from your letters but worth the challenge - ultimately it can be very rewarding. The prisoner can then say; "I have to do this work". It might for example be better to write "It is good", rather than "I think it is good" so that prisoners will not be tempted to expect more, or aim to please *you* in future. Likewise, writing "in your letter.." may be more separating than "you said..." or "you told me..."

When we receive a letter ourselves, what makes it really come alive is not the other person's news, but the connection we feel when we have been truly *heard*.

However..... allow yourself perfect freedom. Prue, writing to thank a prisoner for the beautiful gift of a sculpture throws in '*it's the most exciting gift I've ever received, except perhaps a spaniel puppy I was given when I was 11..*'

When is it appropriate to say a bit about yourself to your correspondent? On occasion it is reassuring to realise that someone else has had a similar experience (particularly relating to their practice) and it is great sometimes to be told a story. The criteria for deciding whether to talk of yourself is always "will this truly be helpful for the prisoner?"

No teaching advice or skill is necessary on your part. To fully listen is the hardest thing anyone can do. Although we are friends, not counsellors, we recognise that the Rogerian technique of listening or reflecting the prisoner's comments back to him or her, is the wisest. Hold great faith in and hope for your prisoner friend. We all have the potential to become a mystic. Be strong for them. And as you keep a mirror steady in your hands, reflecting your friend's life back to him or herself, rejoice with him or her in any little success you may notice. We are opening the door to the possibility of prisoners claiming their full humanity...

6. TALK ABOUT NATURE

Do not hesitate to write about the joy in life, particularly from the natural world. You may feel that prisoners are deprived of those things and you do not want to stir up yearnings for the unattainable. Our experience is that prisoners appreciate being reminded about such things - we can become their eyes and ears, and with this we can bring colour and normality to their lives.

Remind them about the season they are in and talk about the length of the days, the weather, the day and night sky, the moon, and how nature responds to this time of the year. Imagine their cell (whenever you can, ask them to describe it to you, along with their daily programme and the prison so that you can get a better picture when you write) and see how you can encourage them to tune into the rhythms of the earth which we all share as living beings. Ask them to take the time if they ever get a chance to go outside, to pick up a leaf, a stone, a twig or some other element of nature to bring back inside their cell to study. To really observe. To become one alongside this other fruit of nature - themselves and it - together.

7. KEEP IT SIMPLE AND TRUTHFUL

Try to stay positive without losing truth. And keep your affirmation warm and kind rather than gushing. It is sensible to try to keep out of an intense philosophical debate. This can be a real trap, especially if the prisoner's ideas contradict your own in every way. Be gentle and simply draw the person back to present time reality. Sometimes a letter written without adjectives (especially "very") can be more truthful and direct. Just provide a sounding board. Everyday language can be loaded with love and support and when appropriate, a little humour too. Imperatives, like do's and don'ts can slip in if we are not watchful. We are hoping to entice and attract people to a nourishing opportunity, to touch the sacred daily through meditation and yoga. Let us not put them off. Words like perhaps and maybe often win more friends simply by softening the emphatic command.

"Look for the golden thread. Wash out of your hair any sense of being a teacher, advisor, parent, monitor. Search the letter for that glimmer of the prisoner's deepest self wherein lies the Truth that they long for. Build on it, draw it out..."

Sister Prue

8. HOW LONG?

If you can, try not to get into the habit of writing more than a page, or at most a page and a half. It is a good discipline as it forces you to concentrate on exactly how you wish to reply. And to ensure your message comes across with clarity. It also spurs you on to deliver your reply in simple words.

9. AFFIRM RATHER THAN CRITICISE

Prisoners feel supported when their efforts are noted and affirmed, even when they feel their own efforts to be poor. Criticism hurts. Since prisoners are open and frank about their personal problems, they are especially vulnerable to hurt. Most prisoners have a long experience of personal criticism and little or no experience of personal praise. So it is important to eliminate any elements in a reply which can be construed, however remotely, as negative to that prisoner as a person. Whatever the subject of the letter, consider how it will be received. In offering praise, for instance, see that it rings true. Statements like "it is an enormous privilege and honour for me to write to you" may feel separating for the prisoner, or worse, elevate the relationship to a height both of you are going to exhaust yourself living up to.

What happens when the boot is on the other foot and you get a blast of criticism? Hang in there! It hurts, doesn't it? If you want to talk that over, we are always here to listen - and sympathise. Do not fall into the trap, though, of reflecting back their despair. The prisoner may need to vent critical feelings, which may be a healthy and important part of their growth. They may not need to be reminded of something they have said two weeks later! How you handle it, may be an important part of your growth with them.

10. OFFERING ADVICE

If you feel tempted to give advice, it is worth seeing first whether there is another way you could go about it. The best we can offer is a gentle nudge in the hope that they will find that healing on their own. Try not to nag. And try not to offer therapy. If they are able they will hear your message for themselves and it will really mean something. Often a gentle nudge in the form of a question which ends - "what do you think?" moves mountains.

Our expertise lies in our simple meditation practice, breathing and relaxation. Often prisoners will ask for help in other areas. You might like to remind them that some problems can be helped by probation officers and that chaplains, psychologists and prison counsellors might be of help too. Sometimes though, prisoners will have tried these avenues without success. So you need to be tentative and tactful about asking whether the prisoner thinks an expert on the spot could help them. It is important that they never feel you are shrugging them off, even though you may be trying to encourage them to seek help elsewhere for a particular issue. It is also vital not to disparage any local professional, even if your prisoner friend tells you a horrific story of injustice. It is not our job to reinforce a prisoner's negative feelings about someone else. This will simply extend that prisoner's suffering.

Refer the prisoner to psychiatry or the prison medics if appropriate, but keep it light. Do not undermine prison food, drugs which are being prescribed or the prison or prison officers. Try not to reinforce anything they carry which separate them from others. If they are ill treated, empathise, but do not get involved. There are many organisations which fulfil other needs which we have no expertise in. We don't have all the answers. If we try to fill up a space by trying to help with family, educational or some other problem, we may stop someone else coming into the prisoner's life with another kind of helping purpose. Sometimes it may take a long time for someone helpful to emerge into their life. Sometimes we have to practise patience, and prayer, as we observe the prisoner, but eventually that person always does arrive. Then the prisoner will be richer by a spiritual discipline, a correspondent who can support them through letters and a third person too. Just encourage them to practise wholeheartedly. And keep hanging in there!

Having said all that, we do have articles and resources on a range of subjects - do ask.

11. SOME IDEAS YOU MIGHT OFFER

1. If a prisoner is going through a particularly bleak time, or there is cause for celebration, we often light a candle for them. (They are moved when we tell them that).
2. An external touch of the sacred, whether it be a candle, stone, or leaf, can be meaningful to prisoners. Prison is hard and unyielding and an altar of their own making, no matter how simple, can be nourishing.
3. It may be helpful to suggest a small ritual, such as a simple chant (if they are in a single cell!) or reading before and/or after a period of practice.
4. Bereavement or loss. Most prisoners are experiencing losses on many fronts, and in some cases like actual bereavement, it may be appropriate to offer a suggestion; e.g.. creating a personal "funeral" within the cell if the proper funeral has been missed. Writing a letter to the loved one as a dedication is very intimate. Other ideas include choosing a favourite poem (perhaps from the prison library), a hymn or paragraph to say silently. Playing a favourite piece of music, if there is an available tape. A photo

helps and anything which strengthens our connection with the wider universe through something concrete from nature. These ideas can also make an anniversary special.

5. If your prisoner wishes to give something back, we can ask them to pray for us. Or pray for the Trust. There may be other ideas you can suggest for channelling all that glorious flow. If you know of (or could find out about) projects going on at their prison, you might ask if they can get involved (such as voluntary community work). You could see if they are open to doing one good deed a day. Perhaps they could keep a look out for people on their wing who are especially vulnerable - a younger prisoner, a new arrival, a victim of bullying... Encourage them to suggest good deeds and ideas to you so that we can pass them on in our newsletter and letters

12. SIGNING OFF

Signing off. If your letter is totally reflective, all about the prisoner and every line carries love, then 'love John' is an appropriate and seamless finish to your conversation. If you prefer to end your letter 'yours sincerely' and that gives you the freedom to be yourself, that is fine. How to sign off? Here are some examples you have used:

‘with love from’

‘with blessings’

‘in warmth and friendship’

‘with best wishes from us all at the Trust’

‘with love from us all at the Trust, especially from me’

‘with all good wishes’

13. KEEP INFORMED

You may find it helpful to familiarise yourself with the Prison Service in the UK and have some knowledge about prisoners, their average ages and length of sentences, their conditions and security categories. (See reading list). Please do not hesitate to contact the office for information on any aspect of prisons. We also have material about issues which cause many prisoners to be convicted, such as child abuse, psychological and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol dependencies and violence and aggression that you might like to browse. You do not have to do all this at once, take your time. Meanwhile to reiterate, anything you want to know, just ask.

14. FINALLY...

Have confidence. And remember that support in your task is always here. Any time you wish to discuss problems with us in the office, we will be happy to hear from you. We would appreciate it if you will let us know how your correspondence is going from time to time.

PRACTICALITIES

1. FIRST CONTACT

Our answer to a prisoner's first letter is perhaps the most important. This is done by office volunteers using a standard letter (see below) but adding a personal hand written conclusion. This will include a friendly invitation to the practice, and the offer of continued support from the Trust.

FIRST LETTER

Thank you for your letter requesting Bo Lozoff's book *We're All Doing Time* and *Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga* by Sister Elaine MacInnes and Sandy Chubb.

We're All Doing Time has become a source of inspiration and guidance for thousands of prisoners worldwide. Bo Lozoff worked for seven years on this book, trying to make it not just an interesting read, but also a practical guide to getting free. You can use it as a reference book for many years. Each time you read it, it's like reading a brand new book, because you yourself will have changed through doing the practices outlined in it. We especially recommend the breathing and stretching exercises and meditation techniques. If you do them daily for three or four months you will notice a big difference in yourself; others around you will too! If you are stressed and can't get your head together, here's a daily practice which will transform your life. But don't take our word for it - see for yourself...

2. SECOND LETTERS

Most prisoners contacting the Trust are simply asking for our books, and do not begin a regular correspondence. Second letters are also crucial. If you are responding to a prisoner's second letter, be alert to any references they make about the books, and offer them support in establishing a practice

3. PRISON TEACHERS

Check and see if there is already a yoga and meditation teacher working in the prison; this information is available from any member of the PPT staff. It is difficult to practise these disciplines alone and a teacher is a great support.

4. PRISON ADDRESSES

Prison addresses are also freely available from the Trust office.

5. HANDWRITING

Keep it legible! Most prisoners have some difficulties reading, so let us make it as easy as possible! Simple, short words and sentences are easy to read as well as friendly.

6. FILING

We ask you all to keep the prisoner's letter, stapled to a photocopy of your reply even if you are writing from home, (print off a second copy if you are using computer). If a

correspondence comes to an end, please bring all the letters and replies to the office to be filed. All letters are available for you to refer to in the office, any time you wish.

7. DATABASING

All prisoners' details, including dates of letters, are logged in the computer database. To help make this process easy, staple your reply to the prisoner's letter and write the prisoner's surname in large letters on the top right corner of the top sheet. Also indicate if any books have been sent and print out the titles of the books and any enclosures you have sent.

8. REQUESTS FOR STAMPS

You may be asked for stamps. Although prisoners have only tiny amounts of money, please do not send stamps. This can lead to problems (see section on 'Gifts' below).

9. YOUR HOME ADDRESS

Never give prisoners your home address. The PPT follows Prison Service security rules in this respect and we ask you to abide by this policy. We caution strongly against disclosure of home addresses and personal details.

10. VISITS

Similarly, do not arrange a visit. If you are asked to visit, or sent an unsolicited visiting order, simply thank your prisoner for the invitation and tell them that you are unable to visit them as it is against PPT policy laid down by the Trustees. If you are asked for a photograph, you can ignore this. If the request persists, then continue to ignore it or discuss it with a member of staff. Remember, if in doubt, talk with a member of PPT staff.

11. HOLIDAYS

Please alert us if you are going on a long holiday - a card could be sent to the prisoner to prevent them from feeling abandoned during your absence.

12. PEN PALS

If a prisoner wants a pen pal, The New Bridge runs a befriending scheme, with volunteers who write to and visit UK prisoners. Their address (which can be given out to prisoners) is; 27a Medway Street, London, SW1P 2BD. If a prisoner wishes to become pen pals with another prisoner, an organisation called Lifelines supports and befriends prisoners on Death Row in America through letter writing. Their address is 96 Fallowfield, Cambridge. CB4 1PF. - Tel: 01223 564301.

BOOKS TO SEND

All prisoners writing to the PPT are automatically put on the mailing list for newsletters. We ask them to keep us informed if they move. The PPT has tapes of three of our major resource books and of the green prisoner's leaflet (entitled "Let us help you do your time") and is currently working on booklets to send to people with basic literacy needs.

The booklist for people 'inside' is enclosed on P29.

ISSUES THAT MAY CROP UP

1. YOUR OWN FEARS

Fears impede rapport. It helps if you can identify and examine the fears rather than work in nebulous anxiety. This helps:

- BEING AWARE OF FEAR
- WRITING WITH CONFIDENCE AND HUMILITY
- BEING AS STRAIGHT FORWARD AND HONEST AS POSSIBLE

For instance, are you afraid of:

- physical danger from prisoners? Prisoners learning of your address and wishing to visit? Feeling vulnerable?
- not being a good enough correspondent? General insufficiency?
- being judged and found wanting by the PPT staff?
- getting depressed through pain transference?
- being overwhelmed by the problems a prisoner faces? Feeling helpless?
- psychic contamination from a prisoner's past crimes?
- challenging letters?
- making a fool of yourself? Being too middle/ working class?
- dark (contained/ explosive) male/female energy? hostility? mental disturbance of inmates?
- not knowing enough, including the requirements you need to meet? Getting it wrong?
- not being 'enlightened' enough - feeling a fraud

It would be nice to think that when people work with prisoners they have faced their personal fears and so when they enter a correspondence there are no longer barriers to them offering love. But we are all human, so remember that daily meditation practice is invaluable.

All prison work can be extremely slow and you may spend a year feeling that you are never getting anywhere further in encouraging your prisoner friend in any kind of spiritual deepening. You can never know what the immediate or long term effects of your friendship and support will be. Although some prisoners are able to talk openly in a language you both share, others keep their most private thoughts deeply hidden, even from themselves. We can be serene in the knowledge that the power works in its own appropriate way, just as it is. So if one letter seems clear, and the next feels clouded or haunted, do not worry. It is all part of the journey.

2. WHAT TO DO IF A PRISONER OFFERS YOU A GIFT?

Prisoners may want to shower you with gifts in genuine gratitude for the way the discipline is helping them change their lives. While showing sincere appreciation, you may like to mention that the gift is greatly appreciated by everyone at the PPT - if it is a picture or a beautiful object that could be photographed, it might be worth putting in the newsletter. The PPT has a policy that requires us to surrender any gift of value to the Trust. Try to avoid the kind of dynamic where the prisoner feels he or she should keep producing gifts for you in order to draw your praise.

3. WHAT TO DO IF THE PRISONER ASKS FOR A GIFT

Occasionally you may be asked to send a gift. You need to use your own discretion and be very cautious, bearing in mind that a gift can alter the tenor of your correspondence, where you may have been communicating heart to heart. A gift alters the balance of your friendship so you need to consider it very carefully. A prisoner, for many reasons, may gain a false idea of you as a benefactor and dispenser of tangible help, which you may not be prepared to fulfil long term, causing disappointment on both sides. Some gifts could cause difficulties with the prison authorities, which rebounds in prisoner frustration and anger. It is better not to send a gift, but if you are still in any doubt, please get in touch with us.

If you would like to offer a gift to a prisoner, Bo's books *Lineage* and *Just Another Spiritual Book*, or Sister Elaine's books, *Nor Iron Bars* or *Light Sitting in Light*, or *Zen Contemplation* might be appreciated. Equally a lovely card can be offered (unwritten on, so that the prisoner can send it on to a friend or relation).

It may be difficult to deal with insistent and repeated requests for help from a prisoner, particularly if the need genuinely seems to be urgent. Do please discuss such cases with another volunteer and/or a member of the PPT staff.

4. IF YOU DO NOT HEAR FROM SOMEONE IN A LONG TIME

Be prepared for anything. Some prisoners are illiterate (and someone writes their letters for them), some are suffering from mental illness, many are shunted from prison to prison. The average sentence is one year so you have a high chance of a very short correspondence. Prisons may not send a letter on promptly. Some prisoners run out of money - most are extremely poor - and cannot afford a stamp.

Our volunteer Gaie, wrote to us: "*No, the letter writing isn't going well....there's been nothing from anyone for ages. Am I putting them off? Of course there could be the million to one chance that my answers are so helpful, and so all embracing, that there is no need to write again - but I doubt it!*"

Literally the day Gaie's letter arrived, one of her correspondents wrote to say that her letter had arrived at the moment he was about to take his life. Gaie now has several regular correspondents.

Although we normally only write in response to a letter, feel free to send a card at Christmas, or a birthday card if you know when that is.

7. ... OR A PRISONER FRIEND

Our policy in the main is, not to send out books unless requested by the actual receiver. It may be best to write back to your prisoner and suggest that he or she asks/helps his friend to make the request directly to us. If you think that the particular circumstance merits it however, that's OK. The letter accompanying the book could simply say '_____ wants us to send you this book with his love. It comes with ours too. If you do not want this book, perhaps you might like to pass it on to either a friend or the prison library'.

8. TIME TO FINISH A CORRESPONDENCE

There may come a point in a correspondence when it is the right time to draw it to a close. A prisoner may be saying that they know far more about the spiritual life than you and wishes to instruct you rather than respond to an invitation they often do not see or hear. Or you may feel that your prisoner is so deeply disturbed that a reply, no matter how carefully worded, would be unhelpful. A correspondence might become 'stuck', or the prisoner could be trying to indicate that the time has come to close it. Please discuss with staff if you feel a particular correspondence is becoming counter productive, or you would prefer for another volunteer to take it over.

9. APPROACHING RELEASE

Release from prison may be even more stressful and difficult than prison itself. Encourage your correspondent to keep in touch after their release, if they would like to. Remind them that the disciplines they have benefited from in prison are always available and will be even more helpful in the challenges ahead. Offer to provide information about yoga classes in their home town (available from the office), warning that they will not be free of charge. Most of all help them to keep hope alive and not to lose sight of their dreams.

Some former prisoners say they made the mistake of having a clear idea of what they wanted or did not want during the first two years of release. They tell us that their fixed ideas prevented many opportunities from being seized and when they were able to let go enough to respond to invitations which were outside their blueprint they became much happier.

10. WHAT IS THE PRISONER'S OFFENCE? DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

It is preferable not to ask the prisoner for details of his or her crime. Disclosure is best left for the prisoner to decide. You may wonder if they are innocent or, if they claim innocence, are they in denial? We may never know.

11. WILL THEY OFFEND AGAIN? CAN WE HELP STEER PRISONERS AWAY FROM CRIME?

Most crimes, including offences (like joy-riding) which appear to be done just for the buzz, arise out of deep unhappiness. They often follow closely on a traumatic event, at a time when the offender has not the inner resources or outward support to cope in an appropriate way. In responding to and encouraging prisoners in the development of their spirituality, we offer disciplines which can enable them lead happier, more peaceful lives. Whilst it is not our express aim to 'rehabilitate' prisoners, we do hold

out hope that they will begin to take responsibility for their past and future actions and avoid committing crime in the future.

Meditation works therapeutically on our inner blocks, helping us become calm and enabling us to gain control of our emotions. It can help us to develop concentration and self discipline, which are valuable in terms of acquiring other skills. Prisoners gradually notice in themselves that they are beginning to act more appropriately in all situations and we can help this recognition by reflecting back any changes that we perceive. Many prisoners do begin to take responsibility for their lives - and their crimes - and are moved to respond to those around with compassion. All of which helps prisoners right now, as well as when they are released.

There may be times when it will help to challenge a prisoner, for example if we feel that they are not being fully honest with themselves. And do not hold back from expressing your wish that there be no further victims, if you feel it appropriate and timely.

12. PERSONAL QUESTIONS

Prisoners may ask you personal questions - how old are you, are you married, do you have children, what is your religious belief? Every time you discuss yourself you take the focus of attention away from the prisoner. There may be some questions you are comfortable about answering but do not feel under any pressure to offer information you feel uncomfortable disclosing. Prisoners will understand that people like to keep areas of their life private and they will be sympathetic when you tell them this.

13. REQUEST FOR A PHOTO OF YOU

It is better not to send a photo of yourself.

14. RELIGIOUS ISSUES - PAGANISM, THE OCCULT...

Our disciplines are based on silence. We advocate no specific philosophy or theology. Prisoners of any religion or of none can become alive through meditation. Do not be surprised to find yourself learning or being asked about paganism, the occult, out of body experiences, UFO's, and a whole gamut of ideas which your prisoner may be exploring in his/her search to find out who he/she is. Even if you find these unacceptable in themselves, respect them as part of this prisoner's experience as stepping stones on their path

15. MENTAL ILLNESS AND MEDITATION

People experiencing massive stress, or with a history of mental disorder may find benefit from the simple stretching and breathing exercises and yoga, described in *We're All Doing Time* and *Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga*. It is possible that meditation (of any form) may be inappropriate and best avoided for the time being, so be alert for signs of distress if your prisoner has disclosed a mental health condition to you.

16. PRISONERS FEELING UTTER DESPAIR

When prisoners write in utter despair, the most helpful thing we may be able to offer is to provide total empathy for their situation. Do not try to diminish or divert them from

their wretchedness, as it may have taken some time to accrue and may be exerting a very strong hold. Its importance must be heard and never minimalised.

Nevertheless it may be possible, even in a letter of utter despair, to discuss and glean where it may be appropriate to ask whether this could be the very time for them to start to develop their meditation practice on a daily basis more fully - on the grounds that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. And meditation **is** therapeutic. We also recognise that we can only come to true intimacy with the sacred when we let go of everything.

Trust that their essential nature is pure and unclouded by the stains of life. Find the golden thread in what they write.

17. SUICIDE AND SELF HARM/ CONTEMPLATING A CRIME

Every so often a prisoner says that he or she is contemplating suicide. This must be taken seriously. Please discuss the letter with PPT staff immediately. Perhaps you are the only person to whom the prisoner is expressing these thoughts and feelings. It may be decided from the nature of the letter that a member of staff should contact the prison. Sometimes the wish to “do away with yourself” is a figure of speech. Sometimes it isn’t. When you are uncertain, telephone.

If, after discussion, it appears that the prisoner could be genuinely considering taking their life, a member of staff will contact the prison. Initially the point of contact will be the Suicide Awareness Team, (if there is one), or failing that, a sympathetic governor, wing officer or chaplain. The prisoner’s name will be withheld until it is clear that the response will be sympathetic and appropriate.

The prison will judge what action it needs to take on the strength of the information, but we might suggest that the prisoner’s personal officer keep a greater eye on the prisoner and perhaps that he or she is offered a listener or buddy. In every case where this has happened prisons have much appreciated these telephone calls and have always responded with the utmost discretion and kindness.

Phoning the prison in response to a letter is a breach of confidentiality. We do not breach this confidentiality lightly. PPT staff will ask for reassurance from the prison that the source of information is not disclosed. In this way the prisoner’s correspondence with you is not jeopardised. It may seem like stating the obvious, but if the prisoner learns that we contacted the prison, it is likely that they will never write again and may therefore lose a valuable means of support. You may feel their correspondence with you is sacrosanct and confidentiality is imperative under all circumstances. Sorry. We understand and respect you for your views. Nevertheless we ask you to abide by the guidelines of the Prison Phoenix Trust which is to try to save life where possible. (This is an extremely unusual circumstance, by the way prisons usually pick up a suicide possibility long before we do).

If a prisoner (or ex-prisoner) discloses that they are contemplating a crime, again please take this up with a member of PPT staff.

18. OVER-IDENTIFYING WITH THE PRISONER

What you hear may not be nice and the prisoner you are writing to may mention terrible things that have happened to him/her, that he has done or wishes to do to others. Bo reminds us that spiritual practice is not about being 'nice'. If you find that you are losing sleep, or feeling too much responsibility for the welfare of your correspondent, do not suffer alone. Please give us a ring and we can talk it through.

Your correspondence may be important for the prisoner, but there will be many other influences on their lives. This is particularly the case in those difficult months following release. Be wary of falling into the role of mother hen, worrying overly about details concerning their friends, accommodation, new partners, jobs, habits... Who knows what will end up being for the best?

19. RESULTS

The 'results' that may come from your work is in other hands. All the time inner doors are being opened by your letters. Perhaps your invitation will only be taken up 10 or 20 years later! We frequently get letters from prisoners who have been out of contact for many years, offering testimony to the change that their disciplines practiced in prison have brought them.

You might like to ask your prisoner to consider whether any change they might perceive in themselves is a result of their practice. It may be so subtle they may not even be aware of it, in which case they could ask friends if they have noticed a change. The key word is to allow - to allow the healing to happen. We can't 'make' it happen (which is a most welcome change in itself).

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Just as a reminder, the PPT's brief is to support prisoners in their spiritual lives. And our aim remains "what is best for the prisoner".

Many prisoners are needy people. You may consider that boundaries devalue relationships between human beings and that your work transcends this and you are meeting your correspondent on a spiritual rather than a physical level. Many prisoners will not understand this. As a concept a spiritual relationship may seem fine, but our inter-action with prisoners who have suffered many kinds of deprivation and who are often violent, abusive, and disturbed, has to be rooted in common-sense and intelligence.

Keeping clear boundaries which remain unbroken help the prisoner to know that he is at last in touch with someone he can trust, who says what they mean. We do not want to encourage him or her in manipulation techniques, although for some prisoners it is their only known pattern of relationship.

You set the boundaries and then you stick to them. This helps the prisoner to feel safe. They know where they are. However hard they push, the boundaries stay constant. Some prisoners push. Some try to manipulate. Discerning their nature helps our letters to be a real support.

1. SECURITY

Our first concern is your security, so we ask you to use our PO Box address and we will forward any mail you get.

Most prisons have strict rules about enclosures in letters. It is important to follow prison procedures. Books, cards and handouts rarely cause problems, but certain prisons will reject a dried flower, for example. To avoid disappointment to the prisoner, (which might translate into anger against the system and result in punishment) or complications for the prison, check with the PPT before sending anything.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

Letters are usually read by censors and are certainly opened and inspected for money, drugs or other enclosures.

In spite of the prison censorship, we like to respect our prisoner-friends' confidentiality. Some prisoners give you a clear invitation that they will not mind if you share certain aspects of their letter within the office. Sometimes because of your knowledge of your prisoner-friends you are emboldened to ask permission to share their letter or to print something fine they say in the newsletter. Ninety nine times out of a hundred, they are both agreeable and encouraging as they often indicate that they feel affirmed by the wider interest. Nevertheless, confidentiality is at the heart of any truthful exchange between people and we know that without it there cannot be trust.

CONFIDENTIALITY GROUND RULES:

1. Never breach a prisoner's confidentiality with anyone outside the PPT, including people within your own family
2. Never breach a prisoner's confidentiality with a member of prison staff (suicide being the only possible exception - but contact the PPT first and not the prison direct)
3. Never breach a prisoner's confidentiality with professionals inside or outside prison
4. Never contact or respond to the media about any aspect of PPT work without prior permission from the Director

In counselling, or psychotherapeutic or medical circles, there is a similar understanding that confidentiality will not be breached. However in seeking to develop good practice, it is common to bring cases to professional meetings and to discuss issues with colleagues. You are encouraged to consult PPT staff and fellow volunteers frequently. We can all learn together and share in this wonderful work while holding the trust between you and your correspondents as sacrosanct.

3. LOVE

Many prisoners have little or no support. Their families and friends often desert them. Society shuns them. It is possible to get into a close relationship with a prisoner amazingly quickly. This can create problems. Male prisoners often fall in love with female pen friends, or try to elevate the relationship into something very special. If you are a man writing, this can also happen. The word "love" is a loaded one.

You need to be clear about which kind of human - and humane - loving relationship is appropriate between you and the prisoner, as fellow travellers on a spiritual path. When you write, hopefully it comes from a place of inner knowledge and insight. You offer loving *friendship*; and this may be new to the prisoner. But prisoners seem to welcome the liberation that this kind of friendship gives them.

Sometimes, the compassion correspondents feel for prisoners, prompts them to over extend their relationship. Whilst it is normal to care deeply for the welfare of the prisoner, it is important for us to remind ourselves that our job, as correspondent, is to offer the rich techniques of yoga and meditation practice. That is all. Remember that the prisoner is God's child, not ours.

If you maintain these simple boundaries, perhaps for the first time in their life, a prisoner may find himself or herself relating to a person of the opposite sex or the same sex in a normal, free way. You will have been responsible for that.

Do not forget that you can terminate a correspondence if it feels uncomfortable; discuss it with PPT staff to find a way that doesn't leave the prisoner feeling let down.

TRAINING

The PPT offers regular support groups, training and prison visits for volunteers who are letter writers. Please try to make at least two such events every year - they are an opportunity to meet other volunteers and work through any issues arising from your correspondence.

You are also warmly welcomed to attend the PPT workshops for yoga teachers, held in Oxford twice a year.

We don't want you to feel isolated. Many of our volunteers value contact with others to share the difficulties and rewards of the correspondence. You have an address list of all our volunteers - please use it to get to know one another and draw support. There is always someone on the end of the phone at the PPT to talk through issues, no matter how insignificant they may seem.

Should you have some spare time, there is no shortage of help needed in the office - let us know!

CONCLUSION

The Prison Phoenix Trust's greatest resource is its dedicated team of volunteer letter writers. This lengthy manual is to help you to feel confident in your job. Please do not start questioning your ability to do it perfectly. Have faith in yourself and remember

that you do not have to fill in all the gaps for the prisoner. Have the freedom to make mistakes and apologise to the prisoner afterwards. Since we are dealing with needy people, keep yourself on your meditation cushion and have total faith in the practice you are offering. Practice frees you to be confident and humble too, particularly in the face of a correspondent who may be your greatest teacher.

We are so glad you have become our friend and a friend to prisoners too. It is truly lovely to have you aboard...

SANDY CHUBB
OXFORD 2003

Appendix 1

SAMPLE LETTER

To whom it may concern,

Hello, My name's Stevie, I'm doing a three year sentence at (prison name). I've received a leaflet from the Prison Phoenix Trust called "Let us help you do your time". I've read it and found it appealing to me, as I also feel like I've hit rock bottom. I'm really sick and tired of coming in to prison, as I've spent most of my life behind bars. I know I'm only 26 years old but hey, it's my best part of my life gone. I'm really in need of a change of life. I like the sound of your emblem, "rebirth from out of the ashes of an old life". When I read that I thought; "yeah that's what I need, a "rebirth". I want to become one with my mind and body, and get to know it better and maybe learn to self heal it. I've already started doing Yoga here and really like the idea of Meditation, as I'd love to get out of the fast lane of crime, etc. and lead a happier, more peaceful life and get to know myself and the things nature has to offer around me. So I'm very interested in the two books: "We're All Doing Time" and "Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga" and would really like to have them, as I reckon I could really learn a lot from them and any other ones you might have. Anyway, thank you for your time, I look forward to reading your books.

Yours faithfully,

Stevie.

Dear Stevie

Thanks so much for your full letter telling about yourself and asking for the Phoenix Trust books.

The books are a treasure trove and from what you say, you have them at exactly the right moment in your life - when you need them. 26 is a splendid age. I delight to think of you starting out on this great journey now, towards healing and rebirth. Being so deeply aware of your need for a new start will lend you wings. Go well!

It is excellent that you are attending yoga classes and this will help your meditation practice. Stillness and silence are so unfamiliar in our hectic, noisy world, and becoming quiet requires some sustained effort. Whether in or out of prison we all need support and encouragement with this. So I offer to be alongside you should you wish it. Please write with any queries or just to say how you are getting on.

Stevie - I really wish you a happy outcome to your time at (prison name). May you find peace and joy. With love to you,

p.s. Thanks for the smiley faces.

NOTES:

1. The perfect reply! You have listened with care and really connected to Stevie - he'll feel better for reading your letter.
2. You stuck a holly leaf on his letter, as a lovely response to his desire to 'know the things nature has to offer'. Many prisons have rules which would prohibit such an enclosure, so I phoned the Admin

Block. They were glad I checked it out, and are happy for the leaf to go to Stevie, and will look out for it in tomorrow's post! Good thinking about the 'blue tack', which the prison forbids in case it contains heroin, or is used to take imprints of keys. Best to use glue instead to stick the leaf onto his letter.

3. 'Being so deeply aware of your need for a new start will lend you wings...'

What a delightful phrase. Rock bottom is just where he needs to be able to receive the gifts you are offering, the treasure trove you describe.

4. You gently offer to accompany Stevie on his journey with love, acknowledging how difficult it is to gain that inner stillness, and what benefit there can be had in sharing. As the relationship develops, you'll be able to offer specific guidance as he develops a practice.

Appendix 2

WE'RE ALL DOING TIME - INDEX

Bo would be delighted for his words to be used in helping prisoners - don't hesitate to lift phrases!

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SOME USEFUL PHRASES

Your prayer and meditation time is not only your anchor down into the depth of the ocean of your integrity, but is in itself something that is increasing the break through of truth and beauty into the dark places of this world...

Now – right now, as soon as you put this letter down – is the perfect time for you to begin to change your life. Just sit comfortably and straighten your spine by gently lifting your breast bone. Rest your hands in your lap and lower your chin slightly. Keep the eyes open but not “seeing”. Let your breath come in naturally – and flow out naturally, through the nose.

Try to let go into the breath as it enters you and let go into the breath as it flows out. The breath is purifying and cleansing every cell in your body and you will gradually feel the effects of that. However, if you can continue to be absorbed in your breath, a deeper, more subtle benefit will come your way. You are in communion on a deep level, with the most intimate part of yourself – your very living. When you are able to commune in that way the potential for your life is limitless.

Your realisation of the power which is within us – just there for us to tap into, if we give ourselves time and stillness to be/become more truly “who I am” – is the deepest and greatest truth.

Silence is the vehicle which takes us to the innermost centre of our being, where all authentic practise resides. It is a great revelation, since it tells us many things along the way in daily transformation but eventually, it leads to a revelation of the true Self. When we can be the breath in silent meditation, in both inner silence and outer silence, the fruit of this lovely discipline is ours. As someone was saying to me a moment ago here in the office, it is as simple – and as hard – as that.

It is really good to read through your letters and to see how much you have changed. Do you feel more confident in yourself, and less that the world is against you? Do you feel that some of this is attributed to yoga and meditation? Think about it, look back at the person you were in February and see how far you have travelled.

You say something of the utmost importance in your letter. I feel that something is jogging about in you, and not quite there yet. I know the place well – a sense of not being quite satisfied, of not having quite touched one’s deepest truth. I’d like to reflect back what it was you said, perhaps wording it slightly differently. See how it feels.

Appendix 4

HOW NOT TO WRITE A LETTER !

An example to avoid!

Dear

I haven't had a letter from you for a while so I thought that I would drop you a quick line. I have enclosed a few lighteners and I hope you will enjoy them. Nothing too heavy - life's too short for that!

Thanks a million for the picture you sent. It's brilliant! I framed it and put it in the middle of my mantle shelf at home. Do you like the photo I'm sending of my family? I told my daughter about you but she is more interested in lipstick and boyfriends. And still only 12!

I know what you mean about suffering from awful food. I used to get mash every day at my boarding school, so I know what it's like in institutions. Awful isn't it?! Yeuch! I suggest that you eat more salad and be sure to have at least 6 pieces of fruit each day. It's the only way to keep healthy. You'd better totally avoid the prison officer who had a go at you. He sounds like a right bully. I phoned the Duty Governor to tell him what you said happened – you don't mind do you? You might hear something but if nothing changes I'll write a formal letter.

I used to do transcendental meditation too – years ago. I realise now that it's a bit naïve, and I wouldn't go back to it. I think you are being a tiny bit arrogant to claim that you have the 'gift'. Try practising a little humility. And why don't you try our type of meditation again. I only manage 2 hours a day (pathetic isn't it) but have developed a taste for the world of samadhi. If your mind keeps on wandering you're obviously not doing it properly. It's imperative that you keep that focus.

Incense really does help. I'm sorry that you got in trouble when I sent it to you. I had no idea that security would think incense was cannabis! Sorry that you ended up getting an extra week on your sentence. Can't be helped, eh?

Happiness is definitely an inside job. Failure is easy to handle, you just have to work harder. All beings must suffer, otherwise we could never learn to transcend suffering. You could do worse than reading the 4 Noble Truths. Success is also easy to handle, though: you've been working at the wrong problem! I understand that you are serving a life sentence but nothing lasts forever. You never did tell me what you did to get life? Don't worry if you'd prefer not to.

I'll always thought of you as a candle hiding her light behind a bush. You are young, caring and very likable. I'd love to meet you. You should really make more of yourself because you have a lot to offer. One day you will look back and not even think about this, believe me. Life doesn't stop because you are in prison. I will never lie or deceive you. I will always do my best for you. I will never make promises that I can't keep. I have two ears and a mouth that I use in relative proportions. I can guarantee to keep your brain active, provide you with regular challenging and interesting letters. I must say that I do hope you will reply because I believe that we have much to offer each other. I hope whatever you decide that things will pick up for you now that Summer has finally arrived. Keep smiling!

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 5

A Visit to Featherstone Prison

by Angela Sturrock

I joined the Prison Phoenix Trust as a letter writer a few months ago and just recently had the opportunity to visit Featherstone Prison. I felt and still feel very green about prison life. Because of this I got in touch with a Catholic Sister who works as prison chaplain and she invited me to accompany her to mass and to meet some of the prisoners.

Featherstone was built about 20 years ago and has accommodation for 600 men. The day I visited was a Saturday which meant that they were mainly in their cells – I didn't have an opportunity to meet prison officers or see areas other than the Chaplaincy.

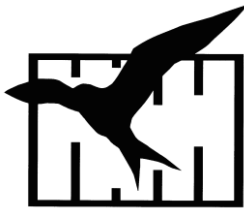
At my first sight of the buildings I recoiled at the amount of barbed wire everywhere. We were let in, had our names recorded and walked through to the far side of the prison to the Chaplaincy. There were long, clean, empty corridors and locked doors. It happened to be a bright, sunny morning and perhaps because of this and my good companion I felt no apprehension.

At the Chaplaincy I met a prisoner, a "lifer" who works there as orderly. He was friendly and easy to talk with and on discovering my interest told me that Bo Lozoff's book is very popular among the men. He himself acts as a Samaritan in the prison, listening to others and keeping alert for threatened suicides.

About 25 youngish men assembled for the service. Shaved heads are in fashion, giving as I thought a tough guy look. However they were courteous and friendly and just ordinary – indeed that was my impression of them all.

After mass we had coffee and biscuits and I talked with several of them. I felt glad to be there. One prisoner told me he had had good opportunities to learn new skills whilst at Featherstone and he deplored the fact that so many are on drugs. They have no interest in training but only in the next fix. Heroin is widely available. Because of drug usage debt is also a big problem.

I thought of the barbed wire, the locked doors, the heroin and the bullying that goes on. I thought of the hard beginnings so many prisoners had experienced. Despite all these negative factors I somehow felt cheered by our meeting as though mutual blessings had been bestowed.



THE PRISON PHOENIX TRUST

P.O.Box 328, Oxford, OX2 7HF

Charity Reg No. 327907

Our Resource Books for those of you on the inside

All of these books are sent free on request to prisoners, to help them with the work of turning their lives around. They are all made publicly available for sale to help us to further the work of the Trust, described by His Honour Sir Stephen Tumim, former H.M. Inspector of Prisons, as the most exciting development in prison work at the present time - and we can promise you an excellent read!

By Sister Elaine MacInnes, Director of the Prison Phoenix Trust 1993-1999

Becoming Free through Meditation and Yoga - Sr. Elaine and Sandy Chubb, Director

This is a handbook for prisoners on meditation and Yoga. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive study, but is an ideal, fully illustrated guide for anyone working at either discipline on their own.

Light Sitting in Light

Sister Elaine is a Catholic nun, who studied and practiced meditation in Japan and the Philippines for thirty years, achieving recognition as a Zen Master. She worked with prisoners and political detainees, victims of torture under the Marcos regime. This work serves as a manual of meditation and as an introduction to the practice in the Christian context - a discipline of living the oneness of body, mind and spirit.

'Getting hold of and reading Sister Elaine's book is like coming upon a treasure trove. There are insights at every turn'. Roderick Toledo

Nor Iron Bars

Three events were arranged to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Prison Phoenix Trust; readings by Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack at Grendon Prison, a talk by Bo Lozoff who came over from the States for the occasion and a talk on *'Imprisoned Spirituality'* which Sister Elaine gave for the Alister Hardy Institute. All are contained in this beautiful book.

Spiritually Imprisoned A small booklet of Sister Elaine's talk to the Alister Hardy Institute

PPT Video (30 minutes) *Hope and Healing – The Work of the Prison Phoenix Trust*

By Bo Lozoff, founder of the Human Kindness Foundation, North Carolina

We're All Doing Time

This book is a manual on how to understand and improve your life, wherever you are. But what makes it a brilliant work, is its use of straightforward language, humour and common sense. Its mixture of Yoga, meditation, prayer and spiritual exploration is a constant lifeline for thousands of prisoners.

'I keep meeting people whose lives have been changed by this book'. - a prisoner's mother

Just Another Spiritual Book

As its name suggests, a compendium of writings from Bo Lozoff, with further moving and thought provoking letters to and from prisoners.

Lineage

A book of powerful short stories, about ordinary people on their spiritual journeys, in and out of prison.

'Bo's work is straight from the heart .. don't miss it!' - Jack Kornfield

READING LIST

"The Prisons Handbook" by Mark Leach, published by OUP

"Client-Centred Therapy" Carl R. Rogers, published by Constable

"Treating Child Sex Offenders and Victims", by Anna C. Salter, published by Sage

"Prison Patter", by Angela Devlin, published by Waterside Press

"Psychology in Prisons" by David J. Cooke, Pamela J. Baldwin and Jacqueline Howison, published by Routledge

"Street Drugs" by Andrew Tyler, published by New English Library, Hodder and Stoughton

.
"We're All Doing Time" by Bo Lozoff

"Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga" by Sister Elaine MacInnes and Sandy Chubb

"The Prisons We Deserve" by Andrew Coyle, published by Harper Collins.

"Invisible Women" by Angela Devlin, published by Waterside Press

All titles are available in the PPT office