The Path Home Series: Workbook 2

CHANGING NEGATIVE THINKING AND BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

Taking back control of your life



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About the Pathways Home Initiative: The Pathways Home initiative is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the Alameda County Probation Department and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), which aims to improve the reentry process for clients returning to Alameda County from prison and jail. The initiative was partially funded by a Second Chance Act grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. For more information and to download copies of ***Welcome Home: Alameda County Reentry Resource Directory***, visit the department's website at www.probation.acgov.org.

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GLOSSARY

Assertive
Being self-assured and confident without being aggressive.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
A type of psychotherapy in which negative patterns of thought about the self and the world are addressed in order to alter unwanted behavior patterns or treat psychological issues like depression or anxiety.

Criminogenic needs
Unmet needs that, if addressed, would reduce a person's likelihood of committing a new crime. These are also referred to as dynamic risk factors. Housing and employment are examples of criminogenic needs.

Hypervigilance
A state of increased alertness in which a person is very sensitive to their surroundings. This can result in a person feeling jumpy or agitated.

Mindfulness
A therapeutic technique in which a person achieves a mental state of calm by focusing their awareness on the present moment. When a person is practicing mindfulness, they acknowledge and accept their feelings, thoughts, and sensations without judgement.

Personal values
The system of beliefs that guides a person's behaviors and choices.

Positive affirmations
Simple, empowering statements in which a person declares their goals and desires as if they have already accomplished them.

Rationalizations
When a person uses an explanation to justify something negative they did or make it seem not so bad.

Risk and needs assessment tool
A questionnaire that identifies the level and type of support a person may need to avoid a new arrest and conviction. Generally, individuals are classified as being at a high, moderate, or low risk of committing a new crime. High-risk individuals need different types of resources and support than low-risk individuals.

Risk factor
Something that increases a person's risk or susceptibility for committing a crime. Risk factors can be dynamic which means they can change, like drug use or employment status. Risk factors can also be static which means they can't change, like the number of times a person has previously been to jail or prison. Risk factors are used by probation officers and parole agents to help determine what support a client needs to avoid rearrest.

Self-efficacy
A person's confidence in their ability to accomplish tasks or take on new roles.

Self-esteem
How much a person values and respects themself.

Shame
An uncomfortable feeling of distress or humiliation that is associated with a bad behavior or misdeed.

Trauma
Damage to a person's psychological wellbeing as a result of one or more distressing events that resulted in overwhelming amounts of stress, fear, or sadness.

Thinking traps
When thinking misleads a person or distorts how they see the world and causes them to make decisions with harmful results.

Visualization
A technique in which a person forms a mental image of something, usually to help calm their mental state or train them to do something.

INTRODUCTION:
Taking control of your journey

No matter what happened in your past, you can change your life.

The path to a new beginning starts with understanding yourself and what brought you to where you are today. By examining yourself and your experiences, you can understand the forces that have shaped your actions and choices. Then you can begin the work of changing what you need to change and learning what you need to learn in order to achieve your goals.

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

The reasons why people get caught up in cycles of crime, arrest, incarceration, and re-arrest are complex.

Some reasons are external. They have to do with your environment and life circumstances. You may have faced economic hardship, lack of job opportunities, racism, discrimination, trauma, health issues, or homelessness. You may have been involved with a gang. You may have come from a community with lots of crime or heavy policing.

Some of the reasons are internal. These have to do with unhealthy patterns of emotions and thoughts that distort how we see the world and lead us to make poor choices.

> ***Are you wondering about where you might end up on your prison journey? Fear of surviving and fear of the time you'll do, fear of the homies running your life? Wherever you go, you will have to make serious choices - about who you really are and how you will live your life. Know this: your past choices have landed you exactly where you are now. Positive choices are possible and will change your life. Whatever the length of your term, you can be a light to yourself, your family, to those around you. You matter. If you are not on a spiritual path, find one, and those positive decisions will be obvious. Your time in prison won't always be easy, but you can learn to thrive, even in the darkest of places.***
>
> - Dwight Krizman
>
> Served 17 years of a 15-to-life sentence; paroled in July 2020.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO FROM HERE?

Changing your circumstances and environment is not easy. You may need to change where you live and who you hang out with. You may need to start a new career path. You may need to disconnect from your community for a while and create a new support network.

Changing negative thoughts and emotions is also not easy. But there are a lot of strategies that can help you.

With hard work and support, you can identify the negative patterns that have impacted your life and take control of them.

Only you can decide where your story goes from here. You can't change the past, but you can choose your future.

THE CHANGE PROCESS

The change process begins with three important steps:

> ***Most people want to change the world to improve their lives, but the world they need to change first is the one inside themselves.***
>
> ***– John C. Maxwell***

① **Recognizing that your behavior is a problem and committing to try to change**

It is much easier to deny responsibility for our actions and their consequences than to face our own failings. But that leaves us stuck repeating behaviors that bring us back to the same bad places.

Moving forward requires taking responsibility for your choices, accepting the consequences of your actions, and learning from your mistakes. It means being willing to admit that you've made a mistake and acknowledge the harm it caused – to your victims, your family, your community, and yourself.

② **Acquiring self-knowledge and self-awareness**

Any process of personal transformation begins with self-knowledge and self-awareness. When you are totally honest with yourself, when you accept the consequences of your decisions and actions, you can build your self-awareness and self-esteem on a solid foundation of strength. Then you can put the past behind you and focus on making good choices in the future.

3. **Having forgiveness and compassion for yourself**

   Any process of change must also start with having compassion and forgiveness for yourself. Turn off that negative internal voice and remember that your past actions don't need to define who you are going forward.

It is never too late to change your life.

Once the resources and support you need have been identified, the work begins. Change is a process that takes time and has setbacks. Even if you achieve your goals, you have to keep working at it so you don't fall back into old patterns again.



Lake Merritt, Oakland

THE GOALS OF THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook will help you understand how to identify and change negative patterns of thinking and behavior that have led to your incarceration. After completing this workbook, you will:

- Understand your personal history and relationships and how they have shaped your life.
- Explore your past history of trauma and understand how it may influence your thinking and behavior.
- Define positive values to guide you in your reentry transition.

- ☑ Recognize negative thinking patterns and develop strategies for transforming them.
- ☑ Understand how emotions can drive destructive behavior.
- ☑ Learn strategies for dealing with negative emotions and the stress of the reentry process.

GUIDING BELIEFS

Before we begin, we want to share a few beliefs that guide this workbook:

- We believe that everyone has the ability to change.
- We believe that people are more than their past mistakes. Things you have done or things that have happened to you in the past do not define who you are.
- We believe that certain life circumstances can cause good people to make bad decisions.
- We believe that early planning improves your chances for a successful reentry.
- We believe that everyone needs help during the reentry process. Your probation officer or parole agent is here to help you reintegrate into the community and rebuild your life.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

The exercises in this workbook have been developed to help you begin to think through and plan for your release. They are also a good way for you and your probation officer or parole agent to get to know each other and develop strategies for your transition out of prison or jail.

You can work on this workbook at your own pace. If you get stuck or find an exercise difficult or unhelpful, take a break. You can come back to it later and try again.

PART 1:
Understanding yourself

Some people are born with advantages, and others deal with a lot of challenges before they even reach adulthood.

Sometimes, the hardships we experience make us stronger and teach us valuable lessons. They can set a foundation that helps us get through hard times. Other times, tough experiences in our lives can lead us down the wrong path.

What is easy for one person to overcome might be very difficult for another person to cope with.

We are unique individuals and each have a different path.



Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Berkeley

YOUR PERSONAL VALUES

Having self-knowledge means understanding how the events of your life have shaped you and continue to affect your choices. Knowing who you are means understanding your needs and desires. It takes being honest with yourself about where you are strong and where you are weak.

Knowing your weaknesses is a source of strength.

Everyone has weaknesses. Even the most successful people have areas in which they struggle. If you know what your weaknesses are, you can be prepared.

Knowing yourself also means understanding what you stand for. Your spirituality and your sense of right and wrong are the foundation of your personal system of values. They guide you in the choices that you make in your life.

Knowing yourself means understanding your values and living in a way that honors them, which is a powerful way to propel yourself into a better future.

What are values?

Your values shape your behavior. They help you make decisions. They give you a sense of purpose and direction.

If one of your personal values is honesty, then being asked to do something that is dishonest or deceitful would be asking you to compromise your personal values and do something that would cause you to lose some respect for yourself.

Values can serve as a guide when making decisions in life because they represent how you see the world. When you can communicate your values to another person, you are telling them who you are.



Where do our personal values come from?

Our values are shaped by the people in our life and by our experiences. When we are very young, the main people who shape our values are our family members. As we grow up, we become influenced by other people in our life, including teachers, coaches, and spiritual leaders. A big influence when we enter adolescence is friends.

Who has shaped your values? Circle as many as you want.

Parents	**Siblings**	**Community Leaders**
Church members	**Gang affiliates**	**Grandparents**
Teachers	**Coaches**	**Friends or peers**
Children	**Neighbors**	**Other:** _____

What experience, event, or other influence has shaped your values? Circle as many as you want.

Work	**Parenthood**	**Romantic relationships**
Media (TV/Internet)	**Childhood trauma**	**Crime or violence**
Discrimination or racism	**Coaches**	**Friends or peers**
Another event or experience: _____		

Values are not fixed. They change as we grow and learn about the world. As you have new experiences, your values will change along with your view of the world and what is important to you.

You may have values that you got from your family or friends that no longer fit who you are today or who you want to be in the future.

MY PERSONAL VALUES

Look at the values written in the box below. Choose the ones that are most important to you and write them in the left column of the table. Then fill in the rest of the table.

Optimism	Hard work	Leadership
Wealth	Growth	Achievement
Status	Honesty	Authenticity
Respect	Boldness	Influence
Humor	Authority	Learning
Service	Leadership	Kindness
Independence	Spirituality	Freedom
Justice	Competence	Creativity
Security	Beauty	Trust
Generosity	Community	Knowledge
Courage	Success	Wisdom

My personal value	Where did you learn this value?	How important is the value to you today?	How well are you living up to this value right now?
Example: Loyalty	*My grandfather*	*Very important*	*OK*

Our actions don't always match our values.

Various things might stand in the way of our being able to live according to our values. A big obstacle can be how we feel about ourselves. We may lack the confidence to ask for guidance or we may lack the assertiveness to stand up to people who are a negative influence and might drag us down.



HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR ABILITIES

Two parts of our personality that can get in the way of our ability to live according to our values are self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how much a person values and respects themselves. When you have a lot of self-esteem, it gives you a positive, confident attitude. It comes across in how you hold yourself and the way you treat other people.

Self-esteem gives you the confidence you need to take action to achieve your goals. On the other hand, having low self-esteem can hold you back.

If you don't feel good about yourself, then you will probably not keep working towards your goals long enough to succeed.

Some people naturally have a confident and assertive personality. For most other people, life experiences are what form self-esteem. If there were people in your life growing up who gave you positive feedback and unconditional love, you are more likely to have high self-esteem. If you experienced trauma in your life, or if you got lots of criticism and negative feedback from caregivers, you may have developed low self-esteem.

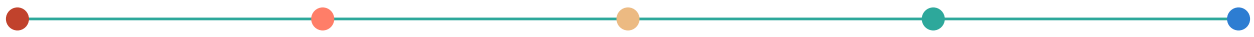
Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's confidence in their ability to accomplish various tasks or goals. It could be your belief in your ability to do a certain job or complete a class.

Your self-efficacy shapes how you deal with challenges and affects how you feel about your place in the world. It also helps you recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments.

People with a strong sense of self-efficacy:	People with a weak sense of self-efficacy:
• View challenging problems as tasks to be mastered • Develop a deep interest in the activities in which they participate • Form a strong sense of commitment to their interests and activities • Recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments	• Avoid challenging tasks • Believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities • Focus on personal failings and negative outcomes • Quickly lose confidence in their abilities

How high is your self-esteem? (Circle one)



Very low Low Average High Very high

How high is your self-efficacy? (Circle one)



Very low Low Average High Very high

If you know where you stand in terms of self-esteem and self-efficacy, you can figure out what to work on.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding the relationships that have shaped us can help us take control of how they influence us in the future.



The influence of family

Our family members are not always biologically related to us. We may have been parented by church leaders, neighbors, relatives, family friends, teachers, foster family members, and other community members.

We learn some of the most important skills for adulthood from family members:

- How to communicate
- How to solve problems
- How to deal with difficult situations and conflict
- How to take care of ourselves and others
- How to take care of our physical and psychological health
- How to ask for help when we are in a difficult situation
- Where to get information

Not all parents have these skills and not all families are able to teach these skills.

In some families, children can learn dysfunctional ways of interacting. As adults, we may pass these bad habits on to our own children.



Communication patterns, culture, and past experiences all come into play in a family's dynamics.

In a family with healthy communication, parents work to create a safe, loving environment where everyone feels valued and is treated with respect. Healthy communication can be very difficult in families with challenges like financial stress, mental health struggles, and substance abuse.

All families have arguments and experience conflict. When conflict becomes extreme or violent, this is unhealthy and can result in trauma.

Family dynamics can have lasting effects

Growing up in families with unhealthy dynamics can have long-term effects. Children raised in environments of abuse or neglect develop unhealthy ways of coping. They have higher levels of anger and aggression as adults and are more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system.

Understanding how your family has shaped you can help you discover where some of your unhealthy thoughts and behaviors come from. It can be a starting point for building healthier relationships with people going forward.

Help with family matters

There are family reunification programs in the community that help returning citizens reunite with their families. These programs provide supportive services to clients and their families, including workshops, legal services, mediation, therapy, and parenting classes.

For more information on these services, speak to your probation officer or parole agent.



Your family's role in a successful reentry

Families can be important sources of support during the reentry process. They can offer you housing and financial assistance. They can help you develop a plan and stick to it by being there if you need to talk, helping you figure out solutions, or holding you accountable.

Family members can also be there to get you back on track if you make a mistake or lose motivation.

Not all family members are able to provide you with support, and that's okay. Reach out to those who can.

And remember that family members do not have to be related to you. If you aren't in contact with your family, you can rely on your support network of friends, partner, spiritual leaders, mentors, coworkers, and neighbors.

List some members of your family and support network who are a positive influence and who you are comfortable asking for support with your reentry plan:

① _____

② _____

③ _____

④ _____

⑤ _____

⑥ _____

⑦ _____

PART 2:
Recognizing negative thinking patterns

How we think and feel guides our actions.

Sometimes it may seem like we have no power over how we think or feel. But in fact, we can choose which thoughts and emotions we believe to be true. We can decide to act only on the ones that are in our best interest.

With practice, we can learn to identify the negative thought patterns and emotional responses that lead us to make poor choices. From there, we can learn how to stop distorted thinking from influencing our actions.



THINKING TRAPS

When our thinking misleads us and causes us to make decisions that have harmful results for us, we are in a thinking trap.

Thinking traps are patterns of thinking that prevent us from seeing the world as it really is. They can distort how we understand our actions and the actions of other people.

Your thoughts are not necessarily a true reflection of reality.

A common thinking trap is taking our emotions as proof of truth or intention. So, if you are feeling hurt, it must mean that someone tried to hurt you.



Quarry Lakes, Fremont

For example, someone may not reply to your question, and you think “they are disrespecting me.” You take your feeling of being disrespected as evidence that someone in fact tried to disrespect you. You tell yourself – "I feel disrespected; therefore, I was disrespected."

But what if this person simply did not hear you? What if it was not the event that caused your feeling of being wronged but rather your emotional response?

If you responded by thinking, "maybe they didn’t hear me," you might not have felt disrespected. Thinking about it differently might have changed how you reacted.

Learning to recognize thinking traps will help you learn ways of responding to situations in healthier and more effective ways.

Common thinking traps

Black-or-white thinking:

"He let me down; I can't trust him ever again."

Always being right:

"I don't care what anybody else thinks!"

Exaggeration:

"My life is over."

Minimization:

"What's the big deal?"

Overgeneralization:

"He is always doing that to me!"

Blaming yourself for an event over which you have no control:

"I should have been there to help her."

Blaming other people or things for your actions:

"I was late to work because my alarm broke."

Disqualifying the positive:

"I got an A because the teacher is an easy grader."

Emotional reasoning:

"I feel like a failure, and therefore I am a failure."

The feeling that others need to change to make you happy:

"If she cared about me, she would do this for me."

Jumping to conclusions:

"He ignored me so he hates me."

Rationalizations:

"My reasons for doing what I did make it not so bad."

RATIONALIZATIONS

Another negative thinking pattern is a rationalization.

A rationalization is when you use an argument to justify something you did or to make it seem not so bad.



Some common rationalizations are:

- **Denial of responsibility -** You were forced by the circumstances to commit the crime.

  "I had to steal to survive."

- **Denial of injury -** The crime was harmless.

  "They won't miss the money."

- **Denial of victim -** The person on the receiving end was asking for it.

  "She shouldn't have left her purse on the table."

- **Shifting blame** – Blaming someone else and seeing yourself as a victim.

  "The people that create the law are corrupt."

- **Appealing to higher loyalties -** The law needs to be broken for the good of a smaller section of society—for example, a gang or a group of friends.

  "I did it to protect my family."

- **Selective social comparison -** Measuring what you did against someone who did things that were even worse.

  "My crime is nothing compared to what he did."

HOW TO STEP AWAY FROM NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

By becoming more aware of your negative thoughts as they occur, you can learn to step away from them before they impact your actions.

You can do this by reminding yourself that your thoughts are just thoughts, not reality or truth. Then, as thoughts come to you, you can decide to listen to them *only if you find them helpful* instead of automatically believing them.



Ask yourself the following questions about each negative thought:

- Is it true?
- Is it helpful?
- Is it just an old story my mind is telling me out of habit?
- Is it possible that a stranger would have a different opinion?
- Does it help me take constructive action?

These questions can help you decide whether you are experiencing a thinking trap. If you decide that the thought doesn't reflect the truth, then you can tell yourself, "It's just a thought, not truth or reality."



Seeing unhelpful thoughts

One way to recognize your thoughts is to imagine them as written words floating across the sky in clouds and asking yourself questions about them.

When an unhelpful thought comes up, stop and try to watch it float across the sky.

Maybe you are thinking that something bad is going to happen. What bad thing are you expecting to happen?

Ask yourself what made you feel this way. Did something trigger the feeling? Is there truly danger or are you flashing back to a point in time when you were in real danger?

Or perhaps you are thinking something negative about yourself. You think that your coworkers don't like you. Have they done something to make you think that? Have they failed to do something that you expected of them? Are you feeling insecure in your life in general?

By spelling out the thought so you can see it clearly and examine it, you can stop and get perspective before you respond. Then you can choose what to do – whether to take the thought seriously or let it go.

PART 3:
Emotions that lead to negative behaviors

Emotions serve important functions. Fear keeps us away from dangerous situations. Joy motivates us to keep doing the things that made us feel good. But our emotions can also lead us to do things that are not in our best interest.

Often strong emotions lie beneath patterns of negative behavior.

Learning to recognize and label your emotions and moods and learning how they shape your behavior can give you back control over your life.



IDENTIFYING YOUR EMOTIONS

The four main emotions that lead to harmful behaviors and choices are hurt, shame, fear, and anger.



Hurt

The brain understands emotional and physical pain in the same way. If you touch a hot stove, your brain will tell you to avoid hot stoves in the future. You might develop a fear of hot things.

Your brain deals with emotional pain in the same way. For some people, feelings of sadness caused by emotional pain can come out as anger. They may try to prevent emotional pain by being hypervigilant and going on the attack before someone has the chance to hurt them.



Shame

Shame is an uncomfortable feeling of distress or humiliation that comes from feeling like you are worthless.

Everyone feels shame at some point, but people who have experienced trauma or abuse can develop continuing and debilitating feelings of shame that lead to destructive behaviors.

They can become overly sensitive to rejection or criticism. They may tend to act out through anger or violence. They may develop depression and anxiety.



Fear

Fear was important to the survival of early humans. If we didn't experience fear, we wouldn't run from dangerous wild animals.

Everyone responds to fear differently. Some people try to run away from the threat. Some people freeze when they are afraid. Some try to eliminate the threat by going on the attack. This is sometimes called the 'fight, flight, or freeze' response.

What do you do when you're afraid? ☐ Fight ☐ Freeze ☐ Flee

Anger

Like our other emotions, anger has a purpose. It pushes us to quickly react and fight back when we are threatened by a predator.

Anger is designed to help you survive.

Anger can provide a surge of energy that makes you feel powerful and in control rather than vulnerable or helpless. It gives you strength and aggression to help you overcome a strong opponent.

Some people develop a habit of turning almost all their vulnerable feelings – fear, guilt, shame, or sadness – into anger.

Fear-based anger is the main cause of violence.



Extreme anger or aggression often comes from a need to be in control. But when a person is raging and lashing out, the anger is controlling them.

There is nothing wrong with being angry about something. It is the way you deal with anger that matters.

A healthy way to express anger is to remain in control as you respectfully explain the reasons for your anger. To do this you have to be willing to hear someone else's point of view. And you have to be willing to forgive them if they apologize.

LABELING YOUR EMOTIONS

The next time you feel angry, ask yourself what feelings lie beneath your anger. Is the anger coming up because you are feeling threatened or rejected?

Labeling the emotions that drive your anger can be a helpful starting point in taking back control.

Think about a situation where you reacted in anger. Write a few words here to remind you of the incident you are thinking about.

What emotions were causing the anger?

Do you feel your response was justified? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did your response get the result you hoped for? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What would you do differently next time?

DEALING WITH NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

There are a lot of ways to deal with negative feelings when they come up. You can talk to a trusted friend. You can take a walk. You can try a few yoga poses. You can try a breathing exercise. There are guides for breathing exercises and yoga sequences in the back of this workbook.

Another good way to cope with negative emotions is mindfulness.



When you practice mindfulness, you focus on the present moment and bring your awareness to the sensations, objects, and feelings in your immediate environment without trying to interpret them, respond to them, or judge them.

The goal of mindfulness is to be present. This means keeping your mind on your environment right now instead of letting it drift to the past or the future, which can get you stuck in a cycle of negative thinking – regret, guilt, and fear.



Practicing Mindfulness

① Stop what you are doing and smell the air, listen to the sounds in your surroundings, and notice the colors of objects in the room. You can also focus on how your body feels. Is your neck stiff? Do your leg muscles feel tight? If you were able to focus on your neck and legs for a few moments, then you were absolutely present.

② After a few moments, you might find your mind wandering to what happened in the past or thoughts of what is to come. If you find your mind drifting away from the present moment, gently bring it back.

③ If you find yourself using a critical or judgmental internal voice, notice the thoughts and then let them pass. Notice the sensations that the critical inner voice left in your body. Let those sensations go, too.

④ Return your attention to the present moment. Use your breath as an anchor. If your mind is accustomed to wandering, it might take some time to slow it down or bring it to the present.

Be patient with yourself.

If you spend a little bit of time on it each day, soon you will be able to steer your mind away from negative thoughts and feelings.

The more you practice mindfulness, the easier it will be to change your thoughts when you need to.

Practicing gratitude

Taking time to acknowledge the things in your life you are grateful for can shift your focus away from toxic emotions such as resentment, regret, and envy. Practicing gratitude makes it harder for you to dwell on negative experiences.

What are you grateful for?

What people or circumstances in your life bring you comfort or joy?



Sunol Regional Wilderness, Alameda County

NOTES:

PART 4:
Strategies for Success

No one else has walked in your shoes. You are a unique individual with a unique past. What works for someone else may not work for you.

Change is a process that will involve setbacks and frustrations, but allowing yourself to grow and evolve is the best gift you can give yourself.

Understanding your risks and needs, communicating effectively, keeping yourself motivated and optimistic, and knowing the support and resources available to you will help you build a toolkit for your success.

KNOWING YOUR RISKS AND NEEDS

There is injustice and unfairness in the world. There is bad luck. Sometimes you can be in the wrong place at the wrong time and end up in a bad situation even if you're not looking for trouble.

You don't always have control over the things that happen to you. But if you figure out what makes you vulnerable to doing things that will result in arrest and incarceration, you can avoid ending up in the same bad place.

Researchers have identified factors that make people more likely to engage in criminal activity. These are called risk factors and they are measurements of how vulnerable you are to getting arrested again. They are used by your probation officer or parole agent to help determine what support and level of supervision you need in order to avoid rearrest.

> ***This thing that we call 'life' is a creative journey, and it is our own thoughts, beliefs, choices, assumptions, and actions that are the tools that we use to navigate our lives, experiences, and our circumstances. So just because life did not deal you the right cards, it does not mean you should give up. It just means you must play the cards you got to their maximum potential. Anytime you suffer a setback or disappointment, just put your head down and keep pushing ahead and do not allow someone else's opinions of you to become your reality.***
>
> - Edwin Hutchinson (a.k.a. Zakee)
>
> Served 21 years on a 30-to-life setence; paroled in April 2020.



Risk factors are divided into two categories: static risk factors and dynamic risk factors.

Static risk factors can't be changed – like your past convictions or age.

Dynamic risk factors (also called criminogenic needs) can be changed – like drug addiction, employment, family support, housing, level of education, mental health, and the people you spend time with. For example, if you successfully complete drug treatment and are clean for a period of time, your risk for being arrested again is lowered. Similarly, your risk for being arrested is lower if you have a job.

If you spend all your time with people who are involved in criminal activity, you will be more likely to commit a crime at some point.

On the other hand, if the people you spend time with influence you to focus on your career development and care about what happens to other people, you will be less likely to engage in activities that harm others and damage your chances at building a good life.

So, choose your friends and acquaintances carefully!

If you don't want to end a friendship that influences you in negative ways, you can limit the duration and frequency of your interactions.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Some people are more passive in their communication and some people are more assertive.

No matter what your communication style is, learning to communicate effectively is an important part of getting your needs met in a healthy way.

Communicating effectively means expressing your feelings and needs, listening with empathy, and responding with understanding.



The next time you are talking with someone, practice these steps for effective communication:

1. Listen and observe with empathy, really trying to understand the other person's point of view, needs, and desires.
2. Acknowledge the other person by repeating what they said and asking questions.
3. Express your needs – "I need to have space…"
4. Describe your feelings as you talk about your needs – "When I feel crowded, I get stressed and uncomfortable. So, I need to be able to control my environment."
5. When necessary, politely say, "No."
6. Make a request – "Can you please call me before you show up at my house?"
7. Acknowledge that the other person listened to your needs by saying, "Thank you."

THE POWER OF VISUALIZATION

A simple but powerful tool that can help you achieve personal goals is visualization.

When we visualize an action, we stimulate the same brain regions that are activated when we perform that action. For example, when you visualize lifting your right hand, it stimulates the same part of the brain that is activated when you lift your right hand. Your brain thinks that you are actually lifting your hand.

Even if you can't do something right now, if you visualize it, you are still getting some of the benefits of actually doing it.

Visualization techniques are so effective that sports psychologists use them with professional athletes. They guide their clients in visualizing every detail of an upcoming game. Having played the game in their mind beforehand can have a big impact on an athlete's performance.

How to do visualization

Visualizations are not hard. You can either visualize an outcome you would like to see as if you are experiencing it, or you can imagine the process of doing what you have to do to achieve that goal.

You might visualize yourself in your dream job. Or you might visualize yourself going to college and taking classes on your way to obtaining a degree.

Start by looking at images and reading books that improve your mental pictures of the experiences you want to imagine. Then you can picture the experience in vivid detail and feel the emotions associated with it.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

The journey of change is full of obstacles, setbacks, and disappointments. It can be hard to stay motivated and positive. A tool that can help you stay motivated and avoid discouragement is a positive affirmation.

Positive affirmations are the opposite of the negative self-talk we sometimes use inside our heads.

Examples of negative self talk:



Using positive affirmations can help you banish these negative thoughts.

Positive affirmations are simple, empowering statements in which you declare your goals and desires as if you accomplished them. They can also express positive views of your abilities and personality traits.

You can use positive affirmations to replace negative beliefs with images and feelings of a new, better reality that you want to achieve.

Examples of positive affirmations:

"I am fulfilled as a successful owner of a bicycle repair business."

"I am attracting joy into my life."

"I am celebrating being able to play with my children."

"I am proud as I make a deposit of $100 into my bank account."

"I am happy to own my own home."

"I am feeling relaxed sitting with my family at home."

"I am joyful walking across the stage as I receive my degree from San Francisco State."



How to create a positive affirmation

1. Start with the phrase "I am" – make it about you, not others.
2. Use present tense.
3. Describe a specific outcome you desire.
4. State it in the positive – declare what you want, not what you don't want.
5. Include action — whenever possible, affirm yourself taking an action.
6. Include a feeling word – an emotion that says how you feel about the outcome.
7. Keep it simple, brief, and specific.

My list of positive affirmations

Positive affirmations can have powerful effects on both the conscious and unconscious mind. They can help get rid of negative and limiting beliefs, and they can replace fears and doubts with confidence and certainty.

You can write down your affirmations and put them where you can see them every day. If you spend 5 to 10 minutes each day repeating your positive affirmations out loud, it will have a big effect on your outlook.

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

NOTES:

PART 5:
Setting goals and planning for setbacks

With self-knowledge and self-awareness, you have the power to make yourself and your environment healthier and more positive. You will be better able to accomplish your goals.

But what are your goals, and how do you set them?



A goal is an aim or a desired result. It is something you want to achieve. Setting goals is an important part of any change process. Goals guide you and keep you motivated when things get frustrating or hard. They are a really important part of a successful reentry.

Once you know where you want to go, you can begin working on making positive change happen.

If you've never given much thought to setting goals, that's okay. It isn't something that comes naturally to everyone. It also isn't easy to set goals when you don't have much control over your life. But you can learn how to set goals now!

SETTING GOALS

Goal setting involves a series of three simple steps.

① Think of where you'd like to see yourself in one year, five years, and ten years.

Visualize this future in one year:

What are you doing? _____

Who are you with? _____

What do you have? _____

What is good about your life? _____

Visualize this future in five years:

What are you doing? _____

Who are you with? _____

What do you have? _____

What is good about your life? _____

Visualize this future in ten years:

What are you doing? _____

Who are you with? _____

What do you have? _____

What is good about your life? _____

② **Write down the parts of this imagined future that you want to turn into a reality.**
Maybe you see yourself having financial security, maybe you own your own home, or maybe you are living a happy family life with your kids.

Use your answers to come up with goals that you would like to achieve.

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

③ **Now, brainstorm. Think about the things you will need to achieve your goals.**
Jot down some notes about possible actions you might need to take and tasks you will need to accomplish.

What supports and resources will you need to complete these steps?

What obstacles might stand in your way?

Come up with some ideas for how you might handle these obstacles.

MAKE A PLAN

Now you're ready to make a plan. Read through your brainstorm answers and think about them for while. Then use the goal worksheets to begin the planning process.

EXAMPLE

GOAL: Have my own apartment			
Actions	**Supports needed**	**Potential challenges**	**Plan for dealing with the challenges**
Get my ID and documents	*I need help getting my birth certificate*	*I can't afford the fee for a birth certificate*	*Talk to your probation officer about barrier removal services*
Get a job	*I need transportation to a job*	*I don't have a car*	*Look for work near public transportation*
Save money for a deposit and monthly rent	*I need a bank account*	*I don't know how to open a bank account*	*Talk to your probation officer about how to open a bank account*
Get an apartment	*I need help figuring out how much I can afford for rent and utilities*	*I have never created a budget before*	*Get help from someone who is good with budgets*
Notes:			

Now it's your turn. Fill out one chart for each of the goals that you developed.

GOAL 1: _____			
Actions	**Supports needed**	**Potential challenges**	**Plan for dealing with the challenges**
Notes:			

GOAL 2:			
Actions	**Supports needed**	**Potential challenges**	**Plan for dealing with the challenges**
Notes:			

GOAL 3: _____

Actions	Supports needed	Potential challenges	Plan for dealing with the challenges

Notes:

GOAL 4:			
Actions	**Supports needed**	**Potential challenges**	**Plan for dealing with the challenges**
Notes:			

PREPARE FOR CHALLENGES

Change is not easy. There will likely be some disruption to your normal way of doing things and your relationships. You may have to give some things up and get used to doing other things differently.

You may have to remove people from your life who are standing in the way of you achieving your goals. You may need to change your environment and the places where you hang out.

> ***Never give up. Only you can fix your problems. I can't blame somebody else for my problems. I need to do what I need to do to make my situation better, even if it is going to take me three years. I'm not going to give up.***
>
> - John Henry
>
> Served 4 years in prison and 2 years in county jail; released in 2020.

That's okay. You can always go back to old friends and acquaintances and engage with them on your own terms when you've gotten your life where you want it.

There will be a period of adjustment for any change. Your probation officer or parole agent can help you figure out ways to help you manage the changes in a positive way.

Don't try to go on this journey alone. Identify positive people in your life who can support you in achieving your goals. Find people who will help you get through the tough periods. This can be someone to share ideas with or who can help you stay motivated.



PLANNING FOR SETBACKS

All journeys of change involve setbacks.

You can't avoid setbacks, but you can get a plan ready to help you deal with them if they arise.



Del Valle Regional Park, Livermore

First, figure out what a high-risk situation is for you and be honest about your ability to cope with this kind of situation. Then, create a plan of what you are going to do if you find yourself in that place.

- If you find yourself around drugs or alcohol, do you have the phone number of someone you can call to pick you up or help you overcome the temptation to use?
- If you find yourself around people who will tempt you to engage in illegal activities, what can you say to remove yourself from the situation without conflict?
- If you are in a situation that might trigger your anger, can you find a way to leave quickly, or can you plan to use techniques to reduce your anger if it gets out of control?

Sometimes change can feel lonely. Do not be too hard on yourself if you get off track. Lasting change can take time. The hardest part is starting.

You can do it. There are people here to help you.

NOTES:

APPENDIX

Breathing in Gratitude

This simple, deep breathing exercise is a great way to calm and relax the body and mind on its own. If you want to add another dimension try mentally reciting a 'gratitude list' once your breathing is settled and steady. An attitude of gratitude can help to remove feelings of anger. It's difficult to be angry and thankful at the same time.

What is a gratitude list? Well it's anything, no matter how big or small, that you're thankful for in your life (past or present). It doesn't have to be virtuous or grand. Start with the small stuff (chocolate!) and see what happens. Things that we might take for granted like: running water; your favourite food; a good book, favourite CD; a good friend; hot radiators on a cold night; having a body and mind to appreciate the world around us. The list is as boundless as your imagination and by focusing on what we have, we can develop a more flexible attitude to the challenges that life throws across our path.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor, a comfortable distance from the bottom. Place your hands on the lower belly.
- For five breaths simply observe how your natural breath moves in and out of your body. Don't try to change or influence it - just notice.
- Begin to breathe in and out through the nose and imagine breathing into the palms of your hands as they rest on your belly.
- Feel the belly rising under your hands as you breathe in, and then falling again as you breathe out.
- Take it gently and gradually for 10 to 20 breaths. You can't force calmness.
- When you can do the above exercise comfortably, add the gratitude list on the breath.
- As you inhale, in your mind say "I'm thankful for…" and on the out breath say in your mind "person, object, place, idea" - whatever you appreciate having, experiencing or knowing.



"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is 'Thank You,' it will be enough."

– Meister Eckhart, 1260 - 1328, German Mystic

Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

Loving Kindness Meditation

You may be feeling alone and separate, missing visits, or your family and friends at this time. Perhaps you wish you could communicate kind feelings to those that feel lost to you. There is a meditation that can help you share feelings of kindness and good will, even though you're apart from those you care about. It's called *Metta* Meditation. *Metta* means love (in a non-romantic sense), friendliness or kindness. So you can also call it loving kindness meditation. It's something anyone and everyone can do and receive.

Being still as you feel the breath and practise the different stages connects you to something that goes beyond physical boundaries. We don't need to understand this. It's best to just try it out. It takes some practice. Start by setting a time each day to do it.

1. Find a spot to sit comfortably, either on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, or on a cushion or pillow on the floor or bed. With your back straight, let your body relax.
2. With your eyes softly gazing down in front of you, bring attention to the feeling of your breath. Breathe naturally. You might notice a sense of opening and expanding as you breathe in and releasing as you breathe out. There are no right or wrong feelings.



3. Keep your attention gently focussed on this for a few minutes until you feel more settled. There may be all kinds of things distracting you – noise, thoughts and sensations. Notice if you are distracted and gently return to the feeling of your breath. This gets easier over time.
4. Think of something that makes you happy. It might be a hobby, a memory of a beautiful sunset, or a time you experienced kindness. If a positive feeling seems out of reach, especially when difficult feelings, along with others, have been blocked out, keep trying. In time these blocks dissolve.
5. As you breathe in and out, expand this feeling by silently saying, "May I be well" on an out-breath. Take around 5 breaths before you move to the next phrase
6. "May I be well." (5 breaths)
   "May I be happy." (5 breaths)
   "May I be safe." (5 breaths)
   "May my mind be peaceful and calm, open and accepting." (5 breaths)
   Sometimes we might think we don't deserve these things. If that's the case, try saying the words silently anyway, without worrying too much about whether you think you are deserving.
7. Now think of someone you would like to wish well: a family member, friend, or someone you appreciate. For a couple of minutes on your out-breath, silently say the words, with 5 breaths in between each phrase.
   "May they be well."
   "May they be happy."
   "May they be safe."
   "May their mind be peaceful and calm, open and accepting."
8. When you feel ready, extend metta to everyone and everything in the world: all people and all living things. For several minutes, on an out-breath, silently say the phrases, with 5 breaths in between each again.
   "May all beings be well."
   "May all beings be happy."
   "May all beings be safe."
   "May all beings be peaceful and calm, open and accepting."

To finish, sit quietly for a few breaths or as long as you wish, simply being.

"Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom."

~ Theodore Isaac Rubin, psychiatrist and author, 1923 - 2019

Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

Cell Bed Yoga

Yoga can be practised by people of all ages and body types. It can be done standing, sitting and lying down. Whatever your body type, energy level or age, yoga is among the best exercises you can do because it is a physical, mental and spiritual exercise!

You may spend a lot of time banged up in your cell on your bed. This routine makes use of the space and time you have.

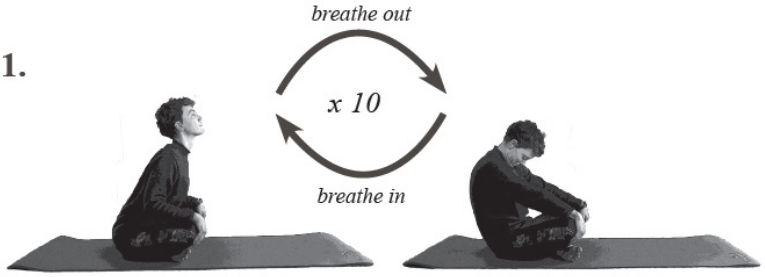
If you aren't sure what to expect, our aim here is for you to feel more relaxed in your body; for your muscles to soften and loosen; and for your breathing rhythm to become slow and deep. When your body relaxes and your breathing slows, you're likely to feel better, and enjoy a brighter mood.

Doing yoga on your bed is just as transformative as doing yoga on a mat, because you're using the same important tools: the power of your attention and the breath.

For all the hardships of being in prison, yoga can help connect you to the profound beauty of being alive. I hope you get a little flavour of that as you do this routine.

If there are no other instructions written, hold each posture for ten slow, even breaths.

1.



2. Happy Baby



3. Bridge



4. Lying Twist
10 breaths on each side.



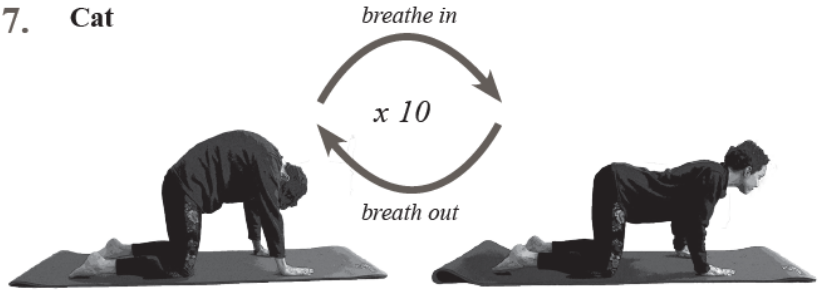
5. Cobbler



6. Neck Stretches

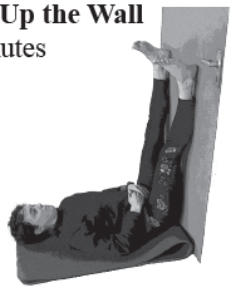


7. Cat



8. Legs Up the Wall

5 minutes



9. Supported Child



10. Rest

This is a chance to rest deeply, while remaining awake and alert. Lie like this, feeling the breath flow in and out of your body. Stay for twenty breaths, or longer if you'd like.





11. Diaphragm Breathing

The diaphragm is a large muscle, like a sheet covering the bottom of your rib cage. When you breathe using the diaphragm you encourage yourself to be calm and quiet.

Lie on your back with your hand on your belly, so you can feel it rising and falling. Continue breathing in and out through the nose. For the next two minutes or so keep your attention on your breathing, and gently breathe lower, into the deepest part of your lungs. As you do this your belly will gently rise on the in-breath, and relax and fall on the out-breath.

Be careful not to push the breath. As much as you can, take out all the effort in your breathing. Let it be as gentle as possible.

12. Sitting

Without slumping, see if you can soften, and settle. Allow your face and jaw to be soft. Shoulders, arms and legs are loose. Ideally the back of your neck is long, and your chin is slightly pointing down. Lower your eyes to an area just in front of your knees. Keep your eyes open.

To start, just feel yourself breathing in normally, and breathe out normally, and silently count, "1." On your next in-breath, feel the breath coming in, and breathing out when you're ready, say "2" silently. Breathing in, feeling the breath. Next out breath, "3." Keep going now, counting your exhalations. Keep going up to 6. When you get to 6, you start again at 1. If you lose count, or if you count past 6, it doesn't matter. Just start again at 1. Counting the breaths is about helping yourself to stay present to this breath, as it's happening.

If you start thinking about something, or get distracted, that's to be expected and is part of the practice. When you notice you're thinking about something else, gently bring your attention back to your breathing. Allow everything else to be in the background. Keep sitting like this for five minutes.

* * *

Meditation is best done every day. If you want to, start with five minutes and see how you get on. You may find you want to do more. You're more likely to start to notice positive changes by doing it regularly. Practising like this, we become better at focussing and not letting our thoughts push us around so much.

In time yoga and meditation can help us rediscover the essential joy of being alive, wherever we find ourselves.



Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

Neck, Shoulder and Back Relaxer

If you're feeling tense or stressed, your neck and shoulders may start to hurt, because they're tense too. Use these simple stretches any time you feel tight and uncomfortable, or like you could do with an unwind. Breathe slowly and deeply as you practise these movements. Focus on your breathing and the sensations in your body rather than the things that have been bothering you. You may find your worries have quietened down afterwards.

1. Head tilts

Stay in each position for three slow, deep breaths, mindful of how your neck feels.



2. Eagle

Press your elbows together in front of you and work on lifting them to shoulder height. Do this for five slow breaths then change sides. Your arms might look like either of the pictures below – both are good if you can feel the stretch across the upper back.



3. Cow face

Five breaths each side. If your hands can reach each other, that's great. If not, use a sock or towel to connect them.



4. Back stretch

Find a ledge to rest your hands on and fold over. Keep your neck in line with the rest of your spine. Take five deep breaths.



5. Shoulder stretch

Clasp your hands behind your back, let your head hang loose and pull your hands far away from your bum. Stay for five slow breaths.



6. Child

Relax like this for five slow breaths. Put your head on a pillow or rest it on your hands (one fist on top of another) if it doesn't reach the floor.



7. Floor twist

Open up slowly into this twist. You may not have room to stretch your arms out – just do your best. Stay like this for five slow breaths and then twist out again on the other side.



8. Rest

Lie like this and focus on your breathing, and the feeling the breath makes as it flows in and out of you. You can count your breaths if you want – up to ten and then start again – or just enjoy the quiet. If your attention wanders away from the breath, just guide it gently back. Stay like this for five minutes, or longer if you want. Let the work you've done to help yourself sink in.



Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

Yoga for Calm

This is a yoga routine designed to help you feel chilled out and safe. It is nice to give yourself a gift, and taking 15 minutes out of your day to look after yourself can be a great one.

For this routine, use your pillow and blanket, and anything soft you can find. Use them as often as you want in the poses – the aim here is to be comfortable. You might find this routine nice to do last thing at night – you should be able to do all of it in bed.

1. Child



Rest like this, with padding under your bum and head if that makes you more comfortable. Stay like this for 10 slow breaths.

2. Thread the Needle



Starting on hands and knees, reach your right arm to the left until your shoulder rests on the floor or on your pillow. Stay like this for 10 slow breaths and then repeat on the other side.

3. Deer Pose



Sit with your legs like this and lean forwards. You might only be able to go down halfway, or you may go all the way down to the floor. Find an angle that's comfortable for you and then stay there for 10 slow breaths. Repeat on the other side.

4. Forward Fold over Crossed Legs



Sit cross legged and stretch forward. Give yourself a few breaths to find the place that's comfortable for you and then take 10 slow breaths. Cross your legs the other way and repeat.

5. Lying Twists



Lie on your back and pull your knees over your chest. Swing them over to the left, keeping your shoulders flat on the floor. Stay for 10 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.

6. Banana



Lie on your back and stretch both your arms and legs to the left, with your back still flat on the floor. You can hook the right leg over the left one, or pull gently on the right arm with the left one to increase the stretch. Stay for 5 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.

7. Goddess



Sit with your feet together and knees out to the side. Lie back onto a stack of pillows and blankets so your chest gently opens. Stay like this for 10 slow breaths, or longer if you wish.

8. Supported Bridge



Place your feet flat on the floor, as close to your bum as you can get them. Slip pillows and blankets under your bum, to raise your hips up so they are higher than your heart. Stay here for 10 slow breaths, or longer.

9. Seated Forward Bend



Sit on your blankets and pillows with your legs out in front of you – it is fine if your knees are bent. Drape your torso forward over your legs and nod a couple of times to relax your neck. Stay here for 10 slow breaths.

10. Sitting



Place your blankets and pillows so you have at least four inches under your sitting bones. Focus on your breath. Count your breaths silently to yourself: in 1, out 2, in 3, out 4 and so on, up to 10, and then start from 1 again. If you lose count, it doesn't matter. Just come back to 1 and begin again. Even if you lose count several times, it doesn't matter. Be gentle with yourself and know that there is nothing to "get wrong". Do this for five minutes, setting an alarm on your watch or clock if you have one. If you practise this meditation every day, things may begin to look clearer and brighter for you. Give it a go and let us know how you get on.

Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

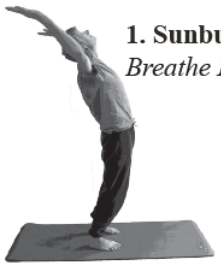
Yoga for Worrying

It is easy to let worrying take up your time and make you unhappy. There are so many things to worry about in life – from small things like not having the money to buy things you want or worrying about upsetting someone, to much bigger problems like a sentencing decision. What a lot of worrying situations have in common is that they're very difficult (or perhaps impossible) to change. However, we can always change our attitude to what is going on. Yoga helps to do that.

Through this routine, keep your breathing calm, deep and slow. If you can calm your breathing, your mind will soon follow. Pay attention to each breath. Enjoy the time you spend in these positions.

1. Sunburst

Breathe In





Breathe Out



Flow between these two with the breath 10 times.

2. Warrior 2



5 breaths each side.

3. Tree



5 breaths each side. Don't worry if you wobble – you can hold onto a wall.

4. Down Dog



Stretch like this for 5 slow breaths.

5. Child

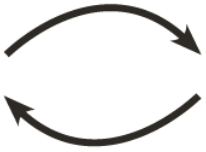


Rest like this for 10 breaths.

6. Bridge

Breathe In





Breathe Out



Flow up and down 3 times. The 3rd time you go up, stay up and hold for 5 slow breaths.

7. Legs up



Stay for 20 breaths, or longer if you like.

8. Sitting



As you sit like this, be aware of your breathing. Let your breath be slow and unforced. As you breathe in, count up to five or six, or even seven. And when you breathe out, make the out-breath the same length. Keep going with each in-breath and each out-breath the same length. Continue for five minutes, gently bringing your attention back to the breath whenever it wanders away.

Source: Prison Phoenix Trust, UK, 2021. See: www.theppt.org.uk.

Tearalong dashed line



San Leandro

Tearalong dashed line



Alameda Beach, Alameda



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