



Prison Yoga Project supports incarcerated people with trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness practices to promote rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety.

- Provide trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness practices as a means of self-empowerment and self-rehabilitation
- Reduce the negative physical, mental, and emotional impacts and healthcare costs associated with stress and unresolved trauma
- Develop the self-awareness, self-worth, empathy, and compassion that leads to positive personal and pro-social choices
- Foster a more peaceful and humane incarceration environment for incarcerated people and staff
- Reduce the rate of recidivism among formerly incarcerated people
- Support the people we serve, and those who serve with us, in their ability to connect with their higher selves
- Publish and distribute educational materials (books, and audio/video programs) to support personal yoga and mindfulness practices
- Assist prisons, governmental agencies, private entities, and individuals in establishing trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness programs
- Provide training in the rationale, practical considerations, and methodology for providing trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness programs

Prison Yoga Project is working to reform the criminal justice system from the inside out. We believe the approach of Restorative Justice, instead of the current punitive approach, will create a more humane and effective system for all people involved. Reform is a necessary step to bringing about a dramatic reduction in the size and cost of mass incarceration, financially and in terms of human suffering.

Punitive justice systems place the offender at the center of the process, seeking only punishment for a crime. Victims become tangential to the process. The harm they have suffered is often not addressed, and they remain unsatisfied. Not addressed, too, are the root causes of crime, the personal and systemic circumstances and conditions that lead to crime, and so it persists. If the intention is to reduce crime and create safer communities, our current criminal justice system is largely ineffective. Our high rates of recidivism are the evidence.



Restorative Justice, on the other hand, places the victim at the center of the process and seeks to address the impact and harm of a crime. It encourages offender accountability to repair the harm they have caused to the victim(s), the families, and the community. It promotes collaboration between the victim, the offender, and the community. It encourages offender re-integration and provides opportunities for direct or indirect dialogue between the victim, offender, and community. As offenders take responsibility for restitution and meet their obligation to the victim and the community, they begin to see the impact of their choices. This victim-centered approach aims to restore wholeness to those impacted by crime, materially, mentally, and emotionally. Importantly, it also seeks to address the root causes of crime.

Restorative Justice also acknowledges that there is harm revealed by crime; the harm suffered by the offender that underlies their harmful behavior. This underlying harm comes in many forms: interpersonal trauma, social disadvantage, institutionalized racism, and systemic bias. These factors can contribute to mental health concerns, addiction, and more. Unless we address this unresolved trauma and these other exacerbating factors, the tendency to re-offend will remain. Punishing people by locking them away in an environment that further traumatizes them does not promote social good, nor does it improve public safety.



Prison Yoga Project offers a Restorative Justice practice that focuses on recovery from trauma, development of resilience, and cultivation of empathy, compassion, and personal responsibility. Our evidence-supported, trauma-informed approach to yoga and mindfulness supports people to face and release unresolved trauma safely and effectively. We provide resources and tools for recognizing and reducing aggression, impulsivity, reactivity, and despair. With these tools, people have a higher chance of taking personal responsibility and thinking and behaving differently. These tools and resources are the foundation for personal and social

transformation so that currently incarcerated men and women may successfully reintegrate as participating members of society.

While our work is done mostly with people who are incarcerated, through this work, we seek to support the correctional officers, administrators, and healthcare staff working in the system. The impact of long-term stress on people working in the system, especially correctional officers, is devastating. It negatively impacts their health, their quality of life, and shortens their lifespans by decades according to some studies. We work to foster a more peaceful environment so that they can do their work with greater ease, less conflict, and more safety.

Through our work with incarcerated people, we are also aiming for a positive impact on families and communities impacted by crime. More than 90% of incarcerated people will be released. We believe that offering support for healing and self-rehabilitation is essential to the intention of creating safer communities. We want them to become better fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. We want to empower them to be better friends and neighbors, and to become integrated, contributing members of their communities.

This Restorative Justice perspective is what we model when we go into a facility. We've seen firsthand how this practice positively impacts the men and women with whom we work. We've also seen how modeling this humanizing approach and demonstrating its efficacy enables our partners in the criminal justice system to take a different approach. We are leading a prison reform movement by example, being the change we want to see in the world.