

Welcome to the new term!

Here at the College, we work hard to try and ensure that we have a wide range of courses and workshops available, so there is something of interest and benefit to everyone.

This term includes some old favourites that have proven popular year after year and some exciting brand new courses. We do our best to make our offer as accessible as possible with both online and in-person sessions. Our face to face courses take place not just in our Colleges in Mirfield and Halifax but in other locations too, such as Brighouse, Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Sowerby Bridge to enable you to live life well in your own communities. If these venues prove popular we will aim to offer more in these locations, and others besides!

So wherever you live, whether you are a familiar face at the College or a new learner, and whatever your reason for enrolling we hope that you find a course that will enable you to harvest your potential this Autumn.

Calderdale & Kirklees
Recovery and Wellbeing College

**HARVEST
YOUR
POTENTIAL!**

Live

Life

Well

Spotlight On..... Blackdog Outdoors



Our partners at Blackdog Outdoors, who kindly deliver our Kayaking sessions have told us a little bit more about their service. Read on to find out more...



The role of sport and recreation in improving mental health is now becoming increasingly clear. The effects of outdoor activities can include stress reduction, improved mood, improved self-esteem and improved health and general wellbeing. The real challenge lies in promoting the idea of “green exercise” to those that will benefit from it, providing opportunities for those people to take up outdoor activities, and to support and encourage them as they set out on their individual adventures. Blackdog Outdoors provide this service.

As a signatory of the Mental Health Charter they actively encourage people to take up outdoor activities and, to help people on their way, they organise recreational events for people to attend at no cost. Details of these events, which are managed by professionally qualified outdoor professionals and supported by mental health first aiders, can be found on their website at www.blackdogoutdoors.co.uk.



Blackdog Outdoors is managed by a small team of volunteers, who all share similar interests, which include climbing, walking, paddle sports, and the outdoors in general. They're also extremely passionate about the promotion of outdoor exercise to improve mental health and wellbeing. They have a wealth of experience in a wide range of outdoor disciplines. They're there to help, so if you need any advice on how to get started outdoors, what equipment to buy, or you need pointing in the right direction, then please drop them a line via e-mail or via their social media networks (all details on the website). They look forward to hearing from you!

Someone like me

"In 2020, just before lockdown my husband, Stan, was diagnosed with Dementia and I became his full-time carer. My own future plans were put on hold and thoughts of putting my newly gained History Degree to use were swept aside.

For the last 3 years we have both felt very isolated; lockdown contributed to Stan's decline and also to my own stress and anxiety. We have no family nearby and most friends have lost touch. We have spent our time sat within the same four walls day after day. I researched online what was available locally for us to do, both together and individually, and I came across the Recovery & Wellbeing College. I spotted the Go Fish Beginners course; Stan had done a little bit of fishing years ago and I thought it might trigger some happy memories for him, so I booked us on and it has been a revelation!

Each session is 3 hours and I worried that Stan wouldn't be able to concentrate for so long, as is always the case with other things but he's been happy to sit there for the full duration, so much so that I have to practically drag him away! The tutors, Mark and DJ have been brilliant with him, and he finds the activity calming and although I go purely to support him, I find it relaxing too.

The fact that Stan can engage in an activity in this way and for so long is surprising and beneficial enough but even more so is the impact it has had on his ability to recall. Typically, he can't remember anything we have done throughout the week, but he talks about fishing all the time. He is always telling other people how much he enjoys it, how big the fish were and how many he has caught, which he always exaggerates, and the amount gets bigger with each passing day!

We have also done the Online Mindful Mandalas course, and although I had to completely adapt what Stan was able to do, I was again surprised at how he happily sat by my side for one and a half hours and took part. I've also tried Kayaking, which I was very apprehensive about for different reasons but once on the water I couldn't think about anything else and had 2 wonderful hours of complete distraction. I've booked on the Self-Care for Carers course in the Autumn and Stan is going to continue fishing. I am just so pleased to have discovered the College – it has made such a difference to both our lives."

By Susan, RWC Learner

Let's Get Physical

“Ten years ago, I was diagnosed with B12 deficiency; I couldn’t think straight, my energy levels dropped, and I suffered with insomnia. To help me sleep I started to drink, but then alcohol took over my life. I would binge drink until I couldn’t swallow another drop, then I’d try and get sober for a couple of weeks, or even months but then something would upset or annoy me and I’d use that as an excuse to start downing the vodka again. I continued in this horrible, vicious circle for the next 4 years.

Then, after a particularly big session something popped in my chest, I lost my sight and had no control over my limbs. I was petrified. Fortunately, my dad was staying with me, he called an ambulance and I spent the next few days in hospital. I later learned that I’d had a Toxic Shock Seizure. Luckily, the physical symptoms were temporary, but I decided then that I would never let this happen again.



I got sober and developed a healthy routine; attending the Recovery College was part of that and it has played a pivotal role in turning my life around. I started swimming and going to the gym but after a while I got Sinusitis which was worsened by the chlorine in the pool. I decided to give cycling a go instead. I hadn’t been on a bike since my youth, but I managed to pick up a ‘pre-loved’ bicycle from Street Bikes in Cleckheaton and getting back in the saddle is one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.

Cycling has done everything for me. It's kept me sober, improved my fitness and my mental health, I’ve made friends, I eat better and lost weight – I’m now 5 stone lighter than I was when I was drinking. I always look forward to my cycling trips and head out several times a week. I never wake up thinking, I don’t fancy it today. Each time I set off, I see it as a new adventure and I always encounter amazing views and scenery, marvellous wildlife and meet interesting people. I know cycling is something I’ll always do. My advice for anyone contemplating getting back on two wheels? All I’ll say is don’t think about it, just do it! You won’t regret it.”

By Mark, RWC Learner

Inspired by Mark's story and want to know how to get re-acquainted with two wheels? Then book on our 'Cycle for Health Information Session' find details here: <https://www.calderdalekirkleesrc.nhs.uk/courses/practical-life-skills/cycle-for-health-information-session/>

Love to Learn: Meditation



Hi, I'm Ben and I'm a Creative Practitioner at the Recovery College. I have had lived experience of mental health problems and I've used meditation to help me deal with my problems since 2007. I find that meditation brings me into a calm, comfortable place and helps me get back in check with the normal everyday world.

I run the "Quiet the Mind" course, I help people to learn to meditate and use it for their own wellbeing and for positive mental health. In this article I want to show you how meditation is not complicated, but simple, and how it can bring comfort and harmony into your life.

What is meditation?

Meditation is "coming to stillness." It is a universal practice and it has positive effects on most people.

The practice of meditation is about focusing your mind/awareness. This can bring you in harmony with stillness, and the peace and simplicity of the present moment. It helps you to deal with stress and anxiety and takes you away from the complications and confusions of the mind. Just focusing your mind in a meditative way for about 20-30 mins can help the busy mind slow down and decrease stress levels. Meditation is a way of switching off and finding your own respite.



How do I meditate?

There are no rules to meditation, it's simply about sitting comfortably and focusing on one thing, such as your breath or a mantra. Try not to expect anything, but just let go and observe what happens. Meditation is not about stopping thinking, it is impossible to stop thinking. Meditation is about slowing the mind down to a calm, restful, still place.



*If you'd like to learn more about meditation and try some of Ben's tried and trusted meditation techniques, why not book onto one of his fun, informative **Quiet the Mind** courses that are coming up this autumn?*

Find out more on our website:

<https://www.calderdalekirklesrc.nhs.uk/courses/discover-tools/quiet-the-mind-the-practice-of-meditation-2/>

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Recovery

We lie hidden
The seed, the fruit
A stronger specimen will emerge
Pain our strength
Adversity our guide
Family our soil
Creativity our stem
Branches our power
Love our flower
Find ME where I grow

Many thanks to our learner, Lynda who was recently inspired to pen the beautiful poem above. If you'd like to get your own creative writing juices flowing then check out these upcoming courses:

Song Writing on 19 September at the RWC in Halifax

<https://www.calderdalekirkleesrc.nhs.uk/courses/practical-life-skills/song-writing-in-collaboration-with-creative-minds/>

Exploring Nature's Lost Words on 21 September at Mirfield Library

<https://www.calderdalekirkleesrc.nhs.uk/courses/practical-life-skills/exploring-natures-lost-words/>

Write Time for Wellbeing on 6 November at the RWC in Mirfield

<https://www.calderdalekirkleesrc.nhs.uk/courses/practical-life-skills/write-time-for-wellbeing/>

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