

## Seasons Greetings!



WINTER  
WE-IES

Are you a Winter Well-ie? We certainly hope so! But if you're not feeling at your best as the evenings draw in and the festive season

approaches then why not see if there's a course or workshop at the College that might help to lift your spirits? For many of us this can be a challenging season, so perhaps getting out of the house, meeting up with people and learning something new - while having fun along the way - might be just the thing! Check out our [courses calendar](#) to see what's on!

Please note the College will be closed between  
Friday 22nd December and  
Tuesday 2nd January

# Spotlight On..... Royal Literary Fund

Writing for Life

RLF  
EDUCATION

The Royal Literary Fund (RLF) trains professional writers – playwrights, poets, novelists, biographers – to share their skills with groups in the community. The RLF aims for a world in which as many people as possible communicate effectively as part of a life well lived. They believe that helping people to express their thoughts and feelings in writing enhances mental health and personal resilience.

That's why the RLF's delighted to partner with Calderdale and Kirklees Recovery College. Through the shared reading and discussion of a poem we work out how words affect us, and how writing can capture a mood, feeling or memory, encouraging learners to do their own writing, often based on ideas from the poem. Finally they listen to what participants have written, if they want to share, and tease out how writing can produce exciting new insights, and change the way we think about ourselves and each other.

*I always emerge (from a Recovery College Session) feeling privileged, happy and enthusiastic, says one writer. And group participants are just as enthusiastic: Here's what one Recovery College Co-ordinator said: The impact on our clients has been nothing short of extraordinary... They have shared how the course has been a turning point for their mental health, providing a creative and empowering outlet during challenging times.*

And the last word from a previous learner:  
*The sessions were inspiring and encouraged me to be more fluent in my writing and improvise on the spot. I'm very pleased with some of the writing I've written quickly. I would definitely recommend the course.*



Their Writing for Self-Expression Online course starts on 17 January 2024. Contact us to book on.

# Someone Like Me

From being a shut-away couch potato to a confident man, new learner, Peter tells us how the College proved to be a remarkable catalyst for change in his life.

My story starts way back and includes: irregular childhood psychological development, neurodiversity, a personality disorder, a motorcycle accident causing a brain injury and other injuries which resulted in several health issues.

The past year has been tough, with additional physical & mental health issues. Unable to work or leave my apartment for long periods, I felt worried, depressed and anxious. I spent a lot of time binge-watching YouTube or Netflix, attempting to just zone out and ignore the problems. I was in pretty bad shape.

The Recovery & Wellbeing College was exactly what I needed. Run by kind, caring people, who were reassuring and supportive from the outset. I knew that I was able to just show up and do what I could, with no pressure. Simply through showing up, I could transform my life. Sometimes it really is OK to be a bit 'selfish' and to take some time and do things that benefit YOU.

Very quickly I felt motivated to change, to pay attention to improving my health and make better choices. After joining the Cycle for Health programme, I got an eBike; making cycling a little easier, while still allowing me to get out there, enjoy the freedom, have fun and do some exercise. I've also learnt to take time to slow down. The online 'Mindful Doodles' course motivated me to just stop occasionally and get the pens and pencils out and pay deep attention to what I am doing, enjoying a moment all for myself. With the help of the College, I've learnt how to Doodle like a champ!

The College's 'Creative Walks' have got me out socialising. Learning new, interesting things about my local area, as well as an opportunity to sketch or practise some crafts. The 'Chess for Beginners' course taught me to slow down, think about how best to play with others, to be kind while still trying to beat the other guy! But win or lose, it didn't matter - I felt like a winner just being there.

Others started to notice changes in me; receiving positive comments and encouragement from others has boosted my confidence and self-esteem. I couldn't help but improve my health and wellbeing! I worry less and kind of just get on with things. I am gradually returning to work, doing what I feel capable of and at my own pace, but also pushing myself to do more each day - to get better each day. While I still have a way to go, I feel confident - and happy.

# Love to Learn: Health Span vs Life Span

If you've ever heard about the above terms, you might imagine that these are the same thing. They are not. Life span is the number of years that we actually live, whereas health span refers to the number of years we will live a life free from chronic disease and disability. Personally, I'm not really bothered about reaching an age where I receive a telegram from Buckingham Palace, however moving into older age free from serious health conditions is something that definitely appeals!

Across the globe, Scientists have studied specific geographical areas, known as the 'Blue Zones'. These zones have the highest number of older people with the lowest rates of chronic disease across the world. Those in their 80's and 90's (and beyond) enjoy such a high quality of life, it seems almost unbelievable to the rest of us. While these areas differ greatly in numerous ways, there are several common factors that seemingly increase the health span of these regions. But how?

**Being Active:-** is part of their everyday lives; gardening, chopping wood for the fire, sweeping floors, walking to buy groceries.

**Community:-** whether going to Church, spending time with family, playing sport with friends, caring for neighbours.

**Purpose:** they have a reason to get up everyday; helping family with childcare, looking after their animals, having a hobby, continuing to work (through choice, many working way past their 60's).

**Diet:-** eating a wide variety of plant based, seasonal foods, such as fruit, vegetables, beans, herbs, nuts etc

Even though we may not live on a tiny Greek island or a remote village in Japan, we can all create our own mini blue zone. We can increase the amount of fruit or veg we eat, check out what's happening in our local area and get involved, join a group, do some exercise. Amazingly, in Sardinia those with the longest health span were those living in the steepest village! Even if your health isn't great now, these changes will still likely have a positive impact - AND improving our health span also increases our life span too. Want to know more? Watch: <https://www.bluezones.com/documentary/>





# Be more lotus



One of our Peer Workers, Laura (see back page) has kindly put pen to paper about how to widen the frame, wave the white flag and be more lotus!

If I could go back in time, I would do some things differently but I wouldn't change who I am or give up my challenges. They have made me who I am; the caring compassionate Yoga Teacher I am today. I believe, it's time to reframe our 'problems' and own them for ourselves. Perhaps a problem isn't that at all. It could be reframed as a challenge, a personal quest, a suffering that must be experienced to get to the sunshine. How we choose to frame our situations, may not entirely be a choice, it's an accumulation of the hurts, experiences and 'problems' of the past, that become an automatic response, stored in the depths of our mind; like tiny soldiers waiting to protect us. Or so they think.....

On auto pilot the army advances on our behalf, sending out alert messages that we are under attack, often overestimating the threat. Our stresses today are not always the life and death that our ancestors had to endure. A rainy day will get us wet, but not ruin our life. So instead of asking 'what if I fail?' Ask 'what if I fly?' Let's remind ourselves that it is the challenges we face that enable us to turn towards the sky, rather than plummet to the ground.

As we begin to listen to the whispers of the conscientious objector, telling us to 'STAND AT EASE' we will gain strength and power as we listen to their soothing words. We can all find resilience at our core when we stop to take a breath and listen. Yes, it takes courage, discomfort, maybe tears and even anger, but when we put the soldiers at ease and wave the white flag, we have truly grasped our true calling. So next time we face a problem, let's ask ourselves, which frame are we looking through? The one that leads to darkness and the soldiers of the mind fighting amongst themselves or the one with the glimmer of light and the conscientious objector waving the white flag. Of course, there will be mud, steps forwards, backwards and sideways with challenges at every corner, but when you reach the top of the hill and wave the white flag, you know you will be stronger. The view may be wonderful or there still may be places that it hurts to look towards, but with each step we take towards the challenge, allows the frame of existence to grow wider, until there are white flags flying all over the place!

The Yogi symbol of the lotus flower tells "we can grow from the muck of even the worst circumstances. We can push through the murky depths, drawn to the light to reach our exquisite full potential in glorious colourful splendour."

Stay up to date, follow us on our socials



Meet Laura, one of our new Peer Project Workers. Laura has already facilitated some courses at the Recovery College in her role with Umbrella Yoga. While she will continue to deliver yoga for us, she will also be facilitating lots of other courses besides, so watch this space! We just hope she has kept her cheesecake making skills up-to-date! Yum!

I feel like this is the workplace I have been searching for all my adult life! One where you feel listened to, that's proactive and cares about everyone they work with. I've picked up some skills along the way which will support me in my role.



I've been a youth worker, an educational eco-coordinator, a cheesecake maker, special education teacher and now a yoga and meditation leader. Through my own road to recovery from recurrent depression I have experienced many types of therapeutic interventions. All this pooled together means I have a unique box of wellbeing tools, which I am very excited to share with the Recovery College and the wider community.

For details on Laura's 'Calming Christmas Crafts' workshops in November & December visit our website:  
<https://www.calderdalekirkleescrc.nhs.uk/courses/discover-tools/calming-christmas-crafts/>

## Contact us

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