

A tourist in your own town

With the arrival of Spring, many of us feel like we are coming out of hibernation, teased by the lighter mornings and swaying tulips, tempting us to peel off our woolly jumpers, luring us into the outdoors. We may hear people around us talking excitedly about venturing off on breaks away, whether in the UK or abroad.

If you're not able to go away or you just want to get out and about, why not become a 'tourist in your own town'? This means getting out into your local area and being intentional about the things around you, immersing yourself in your surroundings in a different way, and asking "If I wasn't from around here, where would I go?"

Using your senses to do this can enhance the experience. Here's a few ideas...

- **Things you can see** - visit a museum, art gallery, or park. Look up as well as around, are there any features of buildings or wildlife you have never noticed before?
- **things you can hear** – listen intentionally, can you hear the hum of traffic, the banter of shop assistants, birdsong?
- **things you can smell** – focus on the aromas around you, a market stall selling fresh food or rosemary growing in the park.
- **things you can touch** – run grass through your fingers as you sit in the park or relax in a library as you turn the crisp pages of a book.
- **things you can taste** – A café you have never been to before may introduce you to a new favourite dish as you try something new from the menu.

Being a tourist in your own town is a great way to channel mindfulness on the move and can help us tune into to our everyday environment.

Spotlight On..... Mirfield Community Centre

As we are now using Mirfield Community Centre as our main course hub, we thought it would be good to share a little more about the building and the people that run it.

Originally it was a primary school and if you look up at the front of the building you can see a small bell tower with bell in situ. The car park was the playground and it has a large hall!

It first opened as a Community Centre in 1996 by Kirklees Council. The Council transferred the Centre in 2018 to the *Mirfield Community Trust*, a registered charity.

The Centre is run and managed by a group of local volunteers, including the Trustees and *friends of the community centre* who help with repairs.

The Trustees aim to provide a community centre that benefits the people of Mirfield and surrounding areas, by providing facilities to deliver activities that help create local social networks, for recreation, leisure and wellbeing. Simply put, to improve the lives of residents.

Recently the Trustees have found funding and completed works on new toilets, heating, roof and a large kitchen. They continue to work to find other sources of funding to update and improve facilities. If you want to know more or become a friend of the community centre go to their website:

<https://mirfieldcommunitycentre.org/>

We look forward to seeing you there and finding out more about our new friends and the old school building!



Upcoming courses at Mirfield Community Centre include Mindfulness, Rooting into Place, Tools to Soothe and various work related courses

Someone Like Me

Huge thanks to learner, Robert, who has told us how the College has helped him fight his fears and overcome self-doubt and anxiety.

When I first came to the Recovery College I was nervous, anxious and feeling down. My confidence was broken. I realised that I couldn't continue to do what I'd always done; wanting to try new and different things but, filled with self-doubt and anxiety, always backing out. I was also self-harming and I knew I couldn't continue down that path. If I kept repeating the same cycle I knew it would only make things worse.

The first time I attended the College I was petrified. I didn't know what to expect. I thought everyone would judge me or think I had no business being there. I realise now that the biggest hurdle is getting there. Attending any course is an achievement. Initially I chose discussion-based courses as I thought these were the ones I needed to do in order to get better. I didn't realise that creative courses also have the same effect.

I'd never considered an art or craft type course, believing I wasn't a creative person and didn't have the necessary skills, but with the courage to try just one course (lino printing) did I realise the benefits. I enjoyed the process of making something. It inspired me to try more courses, each time gaining more confidence. It gave me something to look forward to. When doing this type of course, primarily you are there to enjoy the task but you can still talk about things you are going through in a relaxed way. I was able to unburden myself, without even realising I was doing so, rather than keeping things locked up inside.

Since starting at the College it's really helped me develop as a person; it is only by coming here that things changed for me. The College creates such a positive environment that you can't help but feel safe and relaxed. I'm now back working, something I'd never dreamt possible having had to give up my previous role due to my mental health. My family have noticed a change in me and are able to see how far I've come, even if it wasn't obvious to me at the time.

I hope that the Recovery College continues its outstanding work for years to come, because to me it really does change lives - including mine.

Let's Get Physical

The Menopause: can exercise help?

As a woman of a certain age, I am all too familiar with some of the many symptoms of the menopause. Whatever stage of the menopause you may be in, and whether or not you are on medication, are using alternative therapies or are just doing your best to grin and bear it, you may be experiencing changes that impact on you in a negative way. The good news is that although not a cure-all, exercising during menopause offers lots of benefits that can significantly impact your health and wellbeing and relieve problematic symptoms.

Moving more is a good thing at any stage of a person's life, but there are specific forms of activity that are good for women who are peri or post-menopausal (the menopause itself officially lasting only one day!)

Weight Training (aka resistance or strength training) – this involves lifting weights, whether our own body weight, things we can find at home, or equipment in our local gym. Research shows that 'working to fatigue' is particularly beneficial for menopausal women. This means lifting as heavy a weight as we can manage but doing it for fewer reps, until we can't lift anymore.



Interval (aka Intermittent) Training - is an intense form of exercise with rests in between. Think about running as fast as you can for 1 minute and then having a 1 minute rest before repeating, rather than jogging at a slower pace for 15 minutes. There are lots of ways you can incorporate interval training into your life, doing a few star jumps in front of the telly or skipping in the garden. Just work as hard as you can for very short periods.

Plyometrics - a fancy word that basically means training our muscles to produce power (strength & speed). Jumping is a perfect example of plyometric training and although this high impact activity might not appeal to our pelvic floors, that doesn't mean it isn't worthwhile doing!

So to boost our metabolism, our mood, increase our muscle and bone density, improve our heart health and regulate our hormones, get those trainers on and get moving!

Love to Learn: Expressive Writing

Expressive writing involves putting our thoughts and feelings onto paper. It's more than just jotting down daily events; it's about delving into our emotions, fears and joys. Research has shown that this simple practice can have some surprisingly positive effects on our health and wellbeing.



Reduced Stress & Anxiety - when we express our innermost thoughts through writing, we unload emotional baggage, decluttering our minds and creating mental space for clarity and calmness. This experience gives us the chance to process our emotions more effectively as we gain perspective and emotional relief, giving our mood a boost and increasing our sense of wellbeing.

Enhanced Immune System – amazingly expressive writing can give our immune systems a boost. Research shows that people who engage in this practice regularly showed improved immune responses, strengthening the body's defences against illness. It can also reduce our blood pressure and heart rate, as the act of writing about our feelings can have a calming effect on our bodies.

Improved Sleep – tossing and turning at night? If so, we should consider picking up a pen. When we transfer our racing thoughts onto paper, we'll find it easier to drift off into dreamland.

Improved Memory - writing engages the brain, activating our memory and cognitive function. So for a mini mental workout, grab that notebook!

Expressive writing is much more than words on a page, it's a way to improve our health as well as increase our self-esteem and confidence, as we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and are reminded of our personal growth and inner-strength.

Want to know more? Then book on our 4 week, online 'Writing for Self-Expression' course which starts on Friday 7 June

Stay up to date, follow us on our socials



Hello Everyone! My name is Erika and I have recently joined the College in Kirklees as a Recovery Coach. I am looking forward to meeting you all in person, but in the meantime here is a little about me..... I started my career as a Drama Teacher and have since worked across various education, health and charity settings, most recently at Northorpe Hall supporting young people and parents with emotional health.



I have been on my own recovery journey after being diagnosed with cancer aged 40. Re-connecting with nature and animals played a huge part in my healing, and I now have 2 dogs and a horse who fill my life with purpose, peace, oh and a lot of mud ! You will also find me dipping in wild water swimming whenever I get the chance.

I am a parent carer as my son has disabilities. Our journey has taught me so much and means I am passionate about equality and providing services that see the whole person! I'm so glad to now be part of the Recovery College community where co-production is the foundation for what we do and I look forward to working, learning and sharing lots with all of you in the future.

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