

Celebrating our 10th Anniversary with Creativity

Did you know that engaging in creative activities can significantly boost your mental health? As we celebrate our 10th anniversary, we're embracing the number 10 to explore ways to stay well and be well! Each month, we'll focus on a different theme, and this month, it's all about being creative! We'll be sharing 10 ideas that you can try out for yourself on our social media.

You may think that you are not creative – well, we beg to differ! Creativity takes many forms, not just art, craft, and poetry. By definition, being human means being creative. We make connections between ideas, have dreams, use our imagination, and love to play, which is why we love humour. Creativity connects us with others, challenges us to push ourselves in new directions, and helps us discover or rediscover skills we had forgotten or never knew we had.

What's more, being creative is actually good for your health! A parliamentary report on creativity and health, "Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing," highlights the significant positive impact of the arts on health and wellbeing. It provides evidence that engaging in creative activities can improve mental health, reduce stress, and enhance overall quality of life. Our College certainly believes this too. So, whether you count yourself as a creative or not, why not make this next month a creative one?

Join us this month in exploring your creative side and share your experiences with us on social media and by booking onto one of our many creative courses!



Celebrate Wellbeing on International Women's Day!

International Women's Day on 8 March is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of women worldwide.

It's also a perfect time to reflect on our own wellbeing and the importance of self-care in our busy lives.

Wellbeing is about more than just physical health; it includes our mental, emotional, and social health too. Taking time to nurture ourselves can help us feel more balanced, resilient, and empowered. This International Women's Day, let's recognise our strengths, and focus on the ways we can support our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the women around us. One great way to do this is by connecting with others and sharing our stories. Whether it's through a chat and cuppa with a friend, joining a community group, or participating in a workshop, these connections can provide us with the support and encouragement we need to thrive.

Once again this year, we're running a special workshop for women, **International Women's Day: Find Your Inner 'SHERO'** at Holmfirth Tech, where we will celebrate the strength and resilience of women everywhere. The workshop is designed to celebrate the power of the female voice and the extraordinary women like you who are making positive changes in their lives, homes, and communities. Through engaging activities like group discussions, games, art, and writing, we'll explore and celebrate our unique stories.

Join us for a day of empowerment, connection, and creativity. Let's come together to honour our journeys, share our experiences, boost our wellbeing and inspire each other. Remember, your story matters, and your voice is powerful. We can't wait to celebrate with you and help you find your inner 'SHERO'!

Booking essential - visit our website for details

Someone Like Me

Big shout out to learner, Amelia for kindly sharing how using creativity helped bring light back into her life

“Hi, I’m Amelia and for a long time I’ve struggled with anxiety and depression, but in recent years it got significantly worse. It reached a point where I couldn’t cope anymore. I was self-harming multiple times a day, trying to end it all, wanting the thoughts and negative emotions to go away. I thought no-one understood, and that I was the problem. I thought people would be better off without me - that I’d be doing them a favour.

I’ve always been a creative person, constantly building, drawing and making new things but when my depression and anxiety got worse, it all stopped. I found even doing these things I enjoyed to be too much effort. I tried pushing past this by doing little creative things, knowing it would make me feel better. By doing this and allowing and trusting myself to start feeling better, it helped me express my emotions in ways I couldn’t talk about or put into words. This would come in the forms of scribbled doodles, throwing paint around, anything to get my negative thoughts and emotions out.

These struggles and difficulties have influenced the jewellery that I now make and allow me to better channel my emotions into wearable art. It’s meant that I’ve been able to become passionate about what I do again. I’ve even opened my own Jewellery Shop in Slaithwaite Gallery; all my pieces are influenced by my recovery. It has shown me - and hopefully will show others that it does get better, something I didn’t believe myself for a long time. It all seemed too dark, but with the help of people around me and allowing and pushing myself to be creative again I realised it was true. Anyone can be creative, and anyone can use it to channel their emotions.”



Let's Get Physical: Boosting Creativity

Did you realise that physical activity not only improves our health and wellbeing but also boosts our creativity? Read on to discover how...

- **Improved Blood Flow:** When we exercise, our heart pumps more blood, which carries oxygen to our brain. This helps our brain work better and think more creatively
- **Feel-Good Chemicals:** Exercise makes our brain release chemicals like endorphins and dopamine. These chemicals make us feel happy and less stressed, which helps us come up with new and creative ideas
- **Improved Thinking Skills:** Regular exercise improves our memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. This improvement in our cognitive function helps us think 'outside the box' and come up with alternative and more creative solutions
- **Mental Breaks:** Activities like walking or jogging give us a break from thinking hard, allowing our minds to wander and get those creative juices flowing
- **Long-Term Benefits:** Both short-term and long-term exercise can boost creativity. But regular exercise over time has been proven to have a stronger and longer-lasting effect on our creative thinking.

If you don't do so already, try adding regular physical activity to your daily routine, to improve health and unlock your creative potential. So, next time you need a burst of creativity, try going for a walk or doing a short burst of your favourite exercise!



Love to Learn: It's all in the genes - or is it?

Our DNA plays a big part not just in how we look but also in our health. We all know of someone who has lived well into their nineties (or beyond) with minimal health issues. Similarly, we know others who have faced health challenges earlier in life. If our parents or grandparents were predisposed to certain health conditions, this can cause us worry and concern. We may feel that our genes have already determined what will happen to us in later life and that there is nothing we can do about it. However, that is not quite the case.

Let's think of our genes as a lawn. Just like a lawn, our genes are the foundation of our health. Some of us might have patches in our lawn where the grass doesn't grow well, which can be like having a family history of particular health conditions. But here's the good news: just like you can make a lawn lush and green with the right care, you can improve your health with good lifestyle choices.

Imagine that sunshine and water are like the food you eat and the exercise you do. When you give your lawn plenty of sunshine and water, it thrives. Similarly, when you eat nutritious foods and stay active, you help your body stay healthy and strong, reducing the risk of developing serious health issues, even if your genes are predisposed to particular conditions.

Eating a balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains gives your body the nutrients it needs to function well. Regular exercise keeps your heart, muscles, and bones strong. These healthy habits can make a big difference, no matter what your genetic background is.

So, while we can't change our genes, we can certainly influence how they affect our health. By making healthy choices, we can help our "lawn" grow green and strong. Stay healthy and keep nurturing your body and mind!



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Book Review - The Midnight Library

Peer Worker, Gary is a keen reader (as well as baker extraordinaire, chess player, allotment lover, sci-fi fan and advocate and co-facilitator of *A Plan for Living Well*). His recent favourite read, has inspired him to write the following review. Do you have a fave, uplifting book that you'd like to share?

“I've just finished reading the '**Midnight Library**' by Matt Haig. It is a beautiful book filled with hope and inspiration. The story is about Nora whose life has been going from bad to worse. Then at the stroke of midnight on her last day on earth she finds herself transported to a library. Nora is given the chance to undo her regrets and live out the lives she might have lived, should she have made different decisions and taken different paths. In the end, (**spoiler alert!**) Nora realises that her original life was the best for her and she is transported from the library back to her life. She finds a renewed sense of hope and realises the beauty of living in the present and loving life. I can highly recommend this book and others this author has written. Matt Haig suffered from depression for a number of years in his twenties, he has since recovered from his major episode but lives with his mental health daily as we all do. His books are extremely thoughtful and show a compassionate understanding of what its like to be human. So if you fancy reading a book why not give the Midnight Library a try or perhaps another of Matt's?”



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