



# INSPIRE

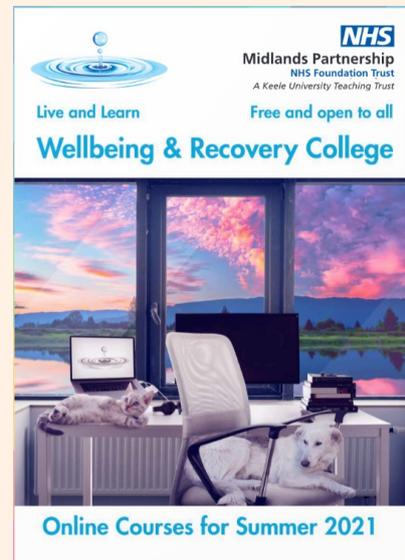
**SPRING 2021**

**ISSUE 5**

Welcome to Issue 5 of INSPIRE, a termly newsletter from the Wellbeing and Recovery College. Here we will keep you up to date with what is happening at the college, including details about our courses, stories from members of the college team, pictures of what our students have been up to recently, and other information that we think you'll find useful.

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We are pleased to be able to deliver a range of courses online via Zoom again in the Summer Term. For further details about this, please see Page 2.

## Are you following us?

Find us on social media to stay up to date on the availability of our courses and much more!



Wellbeing and Recovery  
College MPFT

Website:

<https://recovery.mpft.nhs.uk/>



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## An Update From The College

We hope you like our new prospectus offering online courses throughout the Summer Term. You may have noticed that we don't have as many courses as we usually do. We apologise for this but are confident that this will just be temporary and are already working on more content ready for you in the Autumn term. If you are interested in attending any of the sessions, please do get in touch, if there aren't any spaces this time we can add you to our waiting lists. Where there is a higher demand we will be looking to put on extra sessions if at all possible throughout the term.

We are really pleased to say that we do have lots of other activities available for you during Summer term including course recordings, online social events and mindful moments and we really hope you are able to take advantage of these. Keep an eye out on our social media platforms, our update emails and our newsletter. That's where you will find all the latest goings on. We look forward to seeing you all again and would just like to say thank you for all of your support over this last year and more.

## Coming Up In The Summer Term

Behind the scenes, we've been working hard to prepare our Summer courses. We have over 20 courses available. Our upcoming courses can be found here in our Summer prospectus: <https://flip.printstafford.com/wrcsummer21/>

Following a great reception, this newly introduced course will be coming back:

- **Rhythm of Rest**— This one off session will explore the various types of rest needed to live a balanced life and it will provide you with the opportunity to start thinking about and create your own rhythm of rest.

We've listened to your feedback and decided to rename one of our courses

- **Developing compassion for wellbeing** (previously known as "How compassion can change your brain") - This is a three week course that aims to explore compassion as an approach to mental health. You will learn some simple exercises to start to practice kindness towards yourself and others, aiding recovery in the process.

We also have an exciting course that will be running in the community in two different locations (local restrictions permitting)!

- **Hidden Nature** - Alongside The Beautiful Burial Ground Project team, we have developed a course that focuses on using nature for wellbeing. This course takes place outdoors in local old cemeteries that are often overlooked areas of natural landscape, a haven for wildlife. This course is designed to be a fun, enjoyable insight into nature for wellbeing, including small mindful activities that can be incorporated into your daily life while spending time in natural environments. Please wear suitable sturdy footwear and waterproof clothing. Please note that this course running is subject to Government guidelines at the time of the course being due to run.

**Mindful Moments Weeks:** We understand how difficult it is to incorporate some calm moments into our busy days. Throughout the Summer Term we will be sharing videos of mindful breathing and spiral journaling that you will be able to use to find some mindful moments.

Please keep an eye out on our social media and also our fortnightly update emails where we will share the links to our videos with you.

## Zoom Cafés and Online Social Events

As we will be delivering all of our courses online on Zoom for the foreseeable future, we will continue to run Zoom Cafés for you. A Zoom café is a relaxed, informal 30-minute session that will help you to practice to access a zoom session from an email link, how to use your microphone and camera, where to find the chat box, and more.

Alongside our interactive educational offer and our Mindful Moments, we still want to keep that connection with our students and so will be offering some more Social Events throughout the Summer Term.

Look out for our fortnightly emails and check our social media pages for updates and further details on our Zoom cafés and social events!

## Welcoming Paul and Hannah to the Team

Hi, I'm Hannah, I'm new to the Wellbeing & Recovery College Team. I will be working with Paul Jackson on a staff wellbeing project to provide methods to improve wellbeing following the Covid-19 pandemic. I've been a regular Professional Trainer for some time for the College teaching courses such as Mindfulness, Compassion and Yoga. I'm passionate about enabling people to improve their own wellbeing through practical, accessible methods and have run The Well Nest wellbeing service in Stafford for the last 4 years. I have lived experience of chronic illness and disruption to wellbeing through the pace of modern life and I am a firm believer that we can all take back control of our wellbeing with a little help. When I'm not teaching, you can find me practicing yoga, enjoying the outdoors – walking, running or cycling – and spending as much time as possible in the sun.



Hi, I'm Paul and I'm a lived experience trainer for the college. My passions are many – music, art, photography, football, golf...oh, and Labradoodles (we have a 6 month old puppy). I found out about the college and joined as a student, lapping up most of the courses (I enjoy learning). The college has been a big part of my own recovery journey and now I find myself in the privileged position of being able

to work as a trainer, where my passion is to encourage more men to talk about mental health issues and to pass on a message of hope.

## The Benefits of Gratitude

In our popular Practical Mindfulness course, we take a brief look at gratitude and how it can help us to cultivate a more peaceful mind, by focusing on the small things that brighten our day. In this article we're going to delve a little deeper into the topic. It's easy to notice that the problems and difficulties in our lives often take precedent in our minds, and can dominate our thinking. Gratitude is a way of shifting our focus towards the gifts and blessings that everyday life brings us.

Adopting a gratitude practice doesn't mean that we aren't already thankful for good things that come our way and the kind things that others do for us. It just means that we purposefully shift our focus from what we don't have to what we do have.

Dr Robert Emmons defines gratitude as the "Glad acceptance of another's thoughtfulness, appreciation of splendour and beauty, recognition of the good things in life or the wonder of magical moments". A leading researcher in the field of gratitude, he noted that the biggest factor of good relationships and emotional wellbeing was in fact, gratitude. He promotes the benefits of living gratefully, encouraging us to see all things as a gift and take nothing for granted. This includes recognising that others do many things for us and that we are all inter-related. Think for a moment about how many people have contributed to the food we eat every day, from planting the seeds to displaying them on shelves in the supermarket.

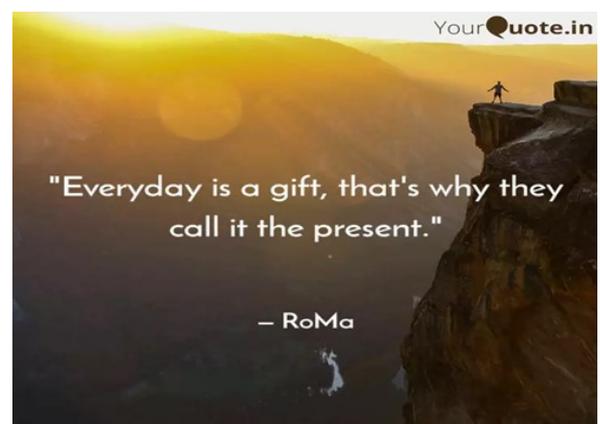
Gratitude can be a fleeting thought, so a daily practice is helpful in cultivating this mindset and growing those neural pathways. A gratitude diary has been found to have positive effects in lowering stress levels, aiding sleep and reducing feelings of depression. It magnifies the positives we see in ourselves, in others and the world.

If this is something you'd like to try, begin by choosing a notebook to have as your gratitude journal. Jot 3 things down at the end of each day that you're grateful for. Aim to do this for 21 days to begin with and then notice if you feel any different, or if you've seen any changes in your life or in your perceptions.

For Instance...Today I am grateful for.....

- The shining morning dew on the grass
- The delicious fruit I ate for lunch
- The opportunity to learn more about gratitude.

If you are interested in our Practical Mindfulness Course, please see our summer prospectus!



## Nature and Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about being present in the moment and consciously observing things in a kind and non-judgemental way. With mindfulness you can observe things with a beginners mind (as if the observed object is completely new to you). When practicing mindfulness people may experience intruding thoughts that aren't relevant to the moment, this is perfectly normal and it is okay. You can just kindly acknowledge the thought without judgement or criticism and gently push it away, bringing yourself back to being in the present moment. It can be difficult for the untrained mind to be at rest but there are a few ways that everyone can incorporate mindfulness into their lives through the use of nature. This may be by taking a walk through a park or through the woods, sitting in your garden or looking out of your window at nature. Passive mindfulness is achieved when sitting trying to be mindful (meditation) whereas photography, crafting and going out into nature is known as active mindfulness.

Taking a walk can allow you to really observe the beauty and variety of things that nature has to offer. You can take in the various shapes and colours that are everywhere in nature all year round, whether you are looking at mushrooms on the ground, insects on flowers or trees in a field. When you slow down during walks and consciously make an effort to be in the moment and look at the nature that surrounds you, you may be surprised at what you see and what you haven't noticed before. Photography can encourage mindfulness during walks as you are concentrating on looking for interesting things to take photos of, this can help you slow down and take in the nature. Whether you have a phone with a camera or a professional camera everyone can take photos of nature. It is also a good idea to take photos of what you have seen if you would like to identify what you have seen after your walk. However in no way do you need to take photos to achieve mindfulness during walks.

If you are not interested in the nature that surrounds you on the specific walk that you are on, then you can focus on yourself. You can be mindful by taking notice of how the ground feels under your feet, if you are swinging your arms when you walk, the way your weight is shifting from your heels to your toes as you walk. Paying attention to all of these things without judgement and just being able to observe and accept what you are noticing by being in the moment is achieving mindfulness.

Even if you don't have time to go for walks you can still use nature for your mindful practices. You can open a window or go outside and just notice how the fresh air feels, how it smells or if there is a breeze. You could watch the insects working outside or listen to the bird songs and how they differ from bird to bird. You could pay attention to the weather by feeling the rain on your skin, watching and listening to how heavy or light the rainfall is or by watching the sun rise or set. You could observe the night sky and look at how many stars you can see, the shape of the moon and how bright it is. All of these things you can do from the comfort of your home.

With all of nature there is so much that you can look at, you can simply notice how things look by observing their colour, shape and texture but you can also notice how things smell, sound or feel. By simply being in the moment and being aware of what your senses are telling you about the nature that you are near without judgement, you are practicing mindfulness. Practicing mindfulness has many benefits that includes increased concentration, reduction of stress, lessens emotional reactivity and enhances coping skills amongst many other benefits.

Picture of a Scarlet Elfcup taken by Beth Rees during a mindful walk around the Stafford Castle grounds.



## How to Start Your Self-care Journey

Self-care is a popular topic these days, especially during the incredibly stressful time of a global pandemic and a cultural movement. Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Although it's a simple concept in theory, it's something we very often overlook. Here at the college we believe that you are always going to be the person that knows yourself best and therefore your self-care practices should be as individual as you are. Our self-care journey can be very different but introducing self care in your life is an essential aspect of leading a happier and healthier life. So how can you start your own self-care journey?

Tips to get started:

**\*Reflect on what you do and don't like** - Think of what you might want to include in your self-care routine

**\*Start small and introduce one thing at a time** - It's easy to want to start everything at once but it will be better to only introduce one new actions at a time, it'll prove more manageable and it will feel less overwhelming

**\*Add new actions after an established routine** - for example if you always have coffee in the morning try and add some self care time after you had your coffee

**\*Be kind to yourself** - Some days will be harder than others, some days you might struggle to include more self-care in your day and that will be ok. Give yourself the kindness you would give a friend

You don't have to start from scratch when creating your own self-care routine, here are some tried and tested core self-care ideas that most people can benefit from:

**\*Move your body** - exercise is great for your mind and body but if a set regimen feels too daunting, just move your body in whatever way feels right to you

**\*Eat a balanced diet** - try to create colourful plates, eat fruit and veggies everyday

**\*Schedule in relaxation time** - be it a book or a bath, find your own zen

**\*Clear your head** - short 5 minute practices of journaling or meditation can help you to reset your mind

**\*Get enough sleep** - ideally between 7 and 9 hours each night

Lookout for our Wellbeing Toolkit course to learn more on how to start and develop your own self-care practices.

## Farewell and Good Luck to Jo and Rach!

Two very beloved members of our team, Jo and Rach have left us and moved on to new ventures. We would like to thank them for everything they've done for the college over the last few years and wish them both all the best in their new jobs!

Jo had something she wanted to say to you all:

Hi everyone,

My three year adventure with the College has come to an end as I set up pastures new in Somerset with my family. It's been an incredible time and I've met so many amazing people on the way. My favourite part of my role was sharing a classroom with you. We always say that together we can learn so much more and I've learned so much from your stories, your experience and the amazing analogies that we've adopted!



The times when I've heard of your courage, seen a group of strangers show love and support for each other, when we've shared hope together are all memories that I will keep with me to remind me of what is possible.

It's been an honour.

I wish you all the very best.

Much love.

Jo - Trainer



## What Have Our Students Been Up To?

### Shannon wrote a beautiful poem:

Today, I dared to let myself dream,  
That the world will one day open again.  
That the locks will loosen, the walls will fall,  
The doors will fly open and reunite us all.

I dared to imagine the warmth of a cuddle,  
A group of my friends all locked in a huddle.  
I felt all the heartbeats, drumming with mine,  
I heard all the laughter, I tasted the wine.

I thought of the feelings I've missed for long,  
The room full of music, united by song.  
The freedom to roam, to plan and to meet  
To hold someone's hand, to meet, to greet.

Just for a moment I dared to dream of,  
The flights I would board to the places I love.  
The moment those eyes would meet mine at the  
gate,  
The feeling of joy after so long a wait.

Today, I dared to let myself dream,  
That the life we once had would happen again.  
That we'd no longer fear the danger of air,  
That our lives would not depend on such care.

They say that we mustn't wish time away,  
But it's hard, my friend, when faced with a day,  
So long in blank hours and so wiped of laughter,  
It's tempting to drift away to thereafter.

So yes, I dared to dream just for a while,  
Of life coming back, it brought me a smile.  
One day I know, this will be in the past,  
And hugs will be free, again, at last.

By Shannon



**Claire Baker made some air dry clay hearts from the workshop.**

She said "The top three I made for my husband and two sons - the yellow represents the sunshine they are in my heart. The plain red one is for my sons girlfriend to remind her she is surrounded by love and the bottom one is for me. The yellow is again to remind me of my boys and the sunshine they bring. The smaller heart is squiffy to represent all our quirkiness we embrace! "

## What Have Our Students Been Up To?

### “Sounds of the Stream”

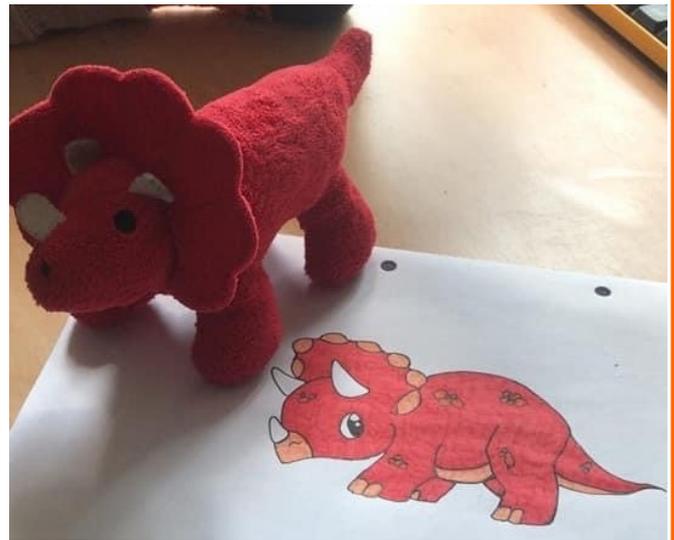
by Karl



**Karl Loxton enjoys photography and has shared this photo with us.**

**He said “I took this recently I call it ‘sounds of the stream’ I love the place and find it so calming”**

**“I started taking photos for fun, as a hobby, and to improve my wellbeing. I find it a way of expressing myself without being seen. To me, they are my Mindful Reflections.”**



**Harley Giles drew her cuddly support Dinosaur!**



**These are two of Paul’s lovely paintings that he has created during lockdown!**



## What Have Our Students Been Up To?

### Poem by Juliet Davies:

When you start to believe,  
When you start to look forward,  
Never to stop to believe that you  
can,  
Never again to look back.

You start to plan start to dream,  
Having a focus, having a purpose,  
Things getting brighter,  
Seeing the future of what is ahead.

The clouds start to clear,  
The sun begins to shine,  
Seeing horizon as it clears,  
Having that feeling.

But nothing lasts for ever,  
The calm before the storm,  
Everything becomes clouded,  
The horizon disappears.

As then it becomes more clouded,  
The sun it hides away,  
Not in your control,  
Nothing you can do.

Just watch as things unravel,  
Just because of honesty,  
Just because of being genuine,  
Never to reach your dream.



The above photos are of a Fallow deer spotted on Cannock Chase and of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker seen at Jackson's Coppice and Marsh by Bethan Rees during her lockdown walks.



This is a photo of a Swan taken by Karl Loxton as part of his Mindful Reflections photography.

## A Big Thank You

We would like to say a number of Thank Yous to everyone who has contributed to the online success of the College so far this year. Firstly we'd like to thank all of our students for your continued support and participation during the spring term. We hope that you are all continuing to enjoy learning in this new virtual way and we very much hope that you'll be joining us again in the summer term. We would also thank all of our trainers. Without you, we would not have been able to deliver the wide range of courses that we have had on offer. Thank you for your flexibility and creativity in making all our courses so accessible. We also wish to thank the core team at the College who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep everything running smoothly! We are incredibly grateful for everyone's dedication and support!

### What are your thoughts?

In everything we do at the college, we really value your feedback and ideas. INSPIRE is a newsletter that we create each term for you: our students and trainers. We would really like to hear from you regarding the type of content you would like to see in our newsletter, including any topics you'd like us to write about and any information that would be helpful. We are looking to expand our 'What have our students been up to?' section, so we welcome your poems, photographs and stories. To submit something to our newsletter, or if you have any

## About Us

We are the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Wellbeing and Recovery College. Here at the college, we aim to provide wellbeing and recovery focused educational courses that are accessible to everyone within our local communities across Staffordshire and Shropshire. We work together with our growing community of students to create a safe learning environment to promote hope, control and opportunity for all. Our courses bring together an equal blend of professional, carer and lived experience trainers who encourage shared learning, where we can all learn from one another through the sharing of each individual journey towards wellbeing and recovery.

**If you are interested in one of our courses but haven't yet enrolled with the college, please get in touch with us via your preferred method to arrange an enrolment appointment. There you will be invited to complete an individual learning plan with a member of our team. Please also get in touch if you are interested in being involved with the Wellbeing and Recovery college team; we'd love to hear from you!**

## Contact Us

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