



Newsletter

Summer 2023

Inspiring hope, opportunity and control

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show how being creative has
helped their recovery journey



Dog: Drawing by Michelle,
Expert by Experience.

Hands: Study of Dante Holding the Hand of
Love by Dante Gabriel Rossetti C1870



Mental health recovery and wellbeing courses, free for anyone 18+ living in Hertfordshire, online and in venues in Hertfordshire.

Contact the college: 01442 864966 | Email: newleaf.wellbeingcollege@nhs.net | www.newleafcollege.co.uk



Hertfordshire Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust





Welcome to our New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College Summer Newsletter

This summer, we focus on CONNECTING as one of the 5 ways to wellbeing. Our In Focus article is about MUSIC and different ways we can connect through music. Our creative corner includes an inspiring blog from one of our students, Roxanne, called 'By letting go, it all gets done'. Roxanne shares with us how she has learned that personal accountability makes all the difference in her recovery journey. This insight has helped her to reconnect with those around her. Thank you to all our students and staff contributors this time. This newsletter is always co-produced and for next time we would like to ask you 'what brings you joy?', and for our five ways to wellbeing section, 'how do you keep learning?'

Alison, Newsletter Editor

[Contact us](#)

[Enrol as a student](#)

[Book a course](#)

[Student Development Programme](#)

INSPIRING QUOTES

Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey. At other times, it is allowing another to take yours." - Vera Nazarian, author (The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration)

In the depths of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer" - Albert Camus, French author and philosopher, (Return to Tipasa)

Communication is merely an exchange of information, but connection is an exchange of our humanity." – Sean Stephenson, American therapist and motivational speaker

College News and Courses

[Find out more or book a course](#)

[Enrol as a new student](#)

Dates	Course Title	
Tue 23rd May	Self-compassion for everyday living	Stevenage
Wed 24th May	Pain explained	Zoom
Thur 25th May	Understanding anxiety	Watford
Mon 5th June Mon 12th June Mon 19th June	Assertive communication skills	Stevenage
Tue 6th June Tue 13th June Tue 20th June	Art journaling to support mental health	Zoom
Wed 7th June Wed 14th June	Making sense of voices	Zoom
Tue 13th June	Understanding medication to support mental wellbeing	Zoom
Thur 15th June	Self-compassion for everyday living	Hemel
Wed 21st June	Understanding anxiety	Ware
Thur 22nd June Thur 29th June	No decision about me without me: shared decision making	Zoom
Mon 26th June Mon 3rd July Mon 10th July	Expressive writing	Zoom
Tue 27th June	Understanding depression	Watford
Wed 28th June	Building opportunities	Zoom
Tue 4th July	Understanding stress	Zoom
Wed 5th July	Healthy living, living well	Zoom
Tue 11th July	Why having a wellbeing plan helps personal recovery	Zoom
Wed 12th July	Self-compassion for everyday living	Ware
Thur 13th July	Wellbeing and creativity	Zoom
Mon 17th July	Learning for wellbeing	Zoom
Tue 18th July	Understanding depression	Stevenage
Wed 19th July	Writing creatively for wellbeing	Zoom
Thur 20th July	Beyond diagnosis - you are not a label	Zoom

Key Wellbeing Dates and events

Dates	Event	How to get involved
15-21 May	Mental Health Awareness Week 2023. The official theme of the week is Anxiety.	See rethink.org , Mind and the Mental Health Foundation . Check out our understanding anxiety course .
21 May	World Meditation Day	See our In the Moment and Mindfulness courses
5 June-11 June	National Growing for Wellbeing Week	See Royal Horticultural Society
12-16 June	Healthy Eating Week (British Nutrition Foundation)	See our Healthy living, living well course
21 June	Fathers' mental health awareness day	Try our mindfulness , spiritual self-care and self-compassion courses



Further support and crisis help page

[Online or PDF download](#)

College resource update



Accessibility is a top priority for the college. We recommend students use the most up-to-date version of Zoom, and our latest Zoom guide shows you how to use accessibility features such as **closed captions** and more. Please contact us if you need any assistance with accessibility.

[New Zoom Guide](#)

Resource recommendation



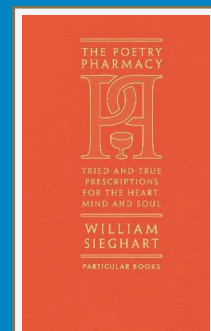
Insightful chat and calming meditation

[Ease your anxiety with Jambo Truong](#)

Resource recommendation

The Poetry Pharmacy, William Sieghart - Resource used in our [expressive writing course](#)

Read for free from your [local Hertfordshire Library](#)



[Hertfordshire Library Membership](#)

5 Ways to Wellbeing

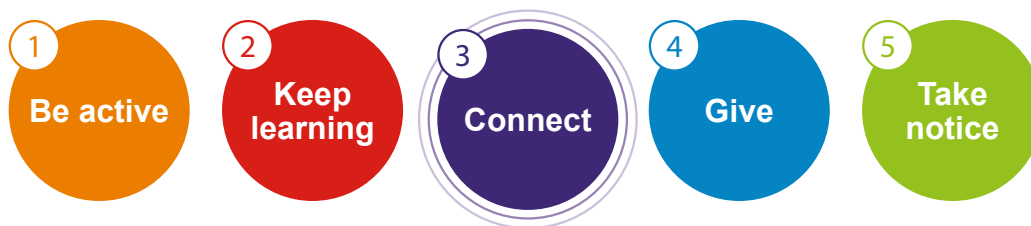
Summer focus – connecting

“I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.”

– Brené Brown, Research Professor of Social Work, University of Houston

Connection is one of the 5 ways to wellbeing. Our courses reflect the research showing that these 5 aspects can help improve your mental and physical wellbeing. We have likened this to your ‘5-a-day fruit and veg’. To understand more about the 5 ways to wellbeing, how they are interlinked and how they can help with mental health recovery, look out for [our course](#), or follow the link to the [Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Tools for change \(5 ways to wellbeing\) page](#).

We can improve our connections with others in many ways. Michael Mosley finds out how we can do this through [expressive writing](#). In our In Focus article, we look at how we can use music to improve connection. We can also use other creative outlets such as [art journalling](#) and [creative writing](#). See our website for our range of creative courses.



Poem: Connecting

By Tina (expert by experience)

*Peering through the crack of the door,
She sits in her purple bucket shaped chair.
Her slim body slouched and clothed loosely.
Her hair wavy and steely grey, touches her neck.
It's slicked to her forehead, dressed with a patterned band.
Her hands clasped around a small teddy bear.
Her eyes fixed ahead watching the flickering picture on the T.V.
Her body still, almost like a statue.
Her eyes resemble dark empty pools of chocolate.
As the door is opened her head turns towards the sound
And her mouth broadly smiles.
Her eyes light up with life and she mumbles and whispers,
In a voice older than her years,
“Glad you came”.*



In our Autumn newsletter we will focus on another of the 5 ways to wellbeing: KEEP LEARNING.

[We'd love to hear from you!](#)

Tell us about the ways you have kept learning and how this has supported your recovery journey.

[Contact us](#)

Michael Mosley interviews Professor Pennebaker about expressive writing and connecting

Podcast by Michael Mosley - Just one thing
Broadcast 08.03.2023

[Listen to podcast](#)



Michael Mosley is a British doctor and BBC journalist. In his 'Just One Thing' 15-minute podcast series, he interviews Professor James Pennebaker from the University of Texas, Austin, about expressive writing.

Professor Pennebaker, 'the man who started it all' according to Michael Mosley, explains why expressive writing is so powerful and how it has been shown to reduce stress and benefit sleep, healing, the immune system and connection with people. He says writing about your thoughts, feelings and upsetting experiences for just 15 minutes a day for 3 or 4 days is a 'free, fast and easy' wellbeing intervention.

Dr Michael Mosley:

'Does this kind of writing also benefit your social life?'

Professor Pennebaker:

'Yes it does. What we found was that people who wrote about this upsetting experience - their social behaviours change - a month later, they were talking more with others, they were more socially engaged, they laughed more. One reason this can be so powerful is that when you write, you get these upsetting experiences out of your mind. You are now able to CONNECT with other people better. You are able to listen to them. You are able to be a better friend.'

Expressive Writing

COURSE
FEEDBACK

'I now use it as a tool for my recovery journey. I have become more hopeful for the future, as expressive writing is helping me to explore my inner most thoughts and feelings in a positive way...I would recommend this course to everyone.'

- Tina, student and expert by experience

'I found it to be interesting in the way it was approached, looking at poems that I didn't know, then taking the first line to come up with our own versions. Which led on to a lot of discussion, laughter, sadness and understanding within the group'

- Cathy, student and expert by experience

[Expressive writing](#)

[Wellbeing and creativity](#)

[Writing creatively for wellbeing](#)

In Focus

Music for connecting and better mental health

Connection is key to healthier and happier lives. Research shows that music helps to release oxytocin in the brain. Oxytocin is the hormone associated with social bonding, trust, positive emotions and relaxation and it helps us to connect with others and is beneficial to our mental health.

Susanna, one of our experts by experience, shares her personal experience. Susanna embraces music as the glue that helps her to make new connections. She calls it the magic triangle of connection – singers, performers and audience providing an intense and powerful joint experience that benefits her anxiety and depression and general mental health and wellbeing.



Artwork by Susanna, expert by experience

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything" - Plato

The magic triangle of connection - music, performers, audience

By Susanna, student and expert by experience

'I am recently back home after a week of singing in Derbyshire with friends.

Much has been written about the benefits of music to the human mind. My favourite inspirational quote comes from Plato:

'Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything'

Spending a whole week with 28 other people, learning 10 pieces of classical choral music well enough to perform to the public in two separate venues, is a big undertaking. If you experience anxiety and depression, it can be a challenge just to turn up each day for rehearsals. Just as challenging can be the effort needed to engage socially with other people, especially if, to begin with, they are strangers.

However, the link is the music, and this is what brings the connectedness. So at the end of a busy week of singing and looking out for each other, we were able to present two complete evenings of old and new classical music, including a choral version of 'The

Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams.

Having an audience to listen to what the musician has prepared is like completing a magic triangle, with the music, the performers, and the audience as the three components. Once the audience is present, there is an adrenaline rush, and suddenly you have a really intense musical experience - a powerful way of connecting with the music, with other performers and with the audience.

I am proud of my small, individual contribution to the success of these concerts but, more than this, I feel massively lucky to have been able to work with other people, with music as the connection and the focus for a very happy week together. I feel closer to these people this year than I did last year, and hope that this closeness and connectedness will continue to grow each time we meet in the future. I am even going down to West Sussex in September to enjoy a week's dog walking for a friend I met on the course. Who would have thought...?'

Music and mental health - articles and research

Music for recovery

Many of us use music to connect with our feelings, lift our mood, or find expression. Our [Spirituality for self care](#) course references the British composer and songwriter, Peter Raeburn, who, after successful major brain surgery, was inspired to write an album, which he called 'Recovery'. He hopes that the music encourages other people on their own unique journey of recovery.

['The making of recovery' video](#)

['The full score of 'recovery' video](#)

['Harnessing music for recovery' blog](#)

How music brings people together - Psychology Today

'Music is a collective experience that can overcome physical distance.....Soothing music can release oxytocin in the brain. Music is a tool that provides a sense of comfort and social connection among people. Music-related activities (dance and singing) encourage the formation of bigger social networks and provide a safe way for individuals to interact and share experiences without revealing their personal information (Greenberg, 2021).'

[Read full article](#)

6 learnings about the power of music on mental health

Music Matters, BBC Radio 3

In this article you can read about how a music project brought connection and "moments of joy" to children in hospital, how music can help with postnatal depression, that "sad" music can be uplifting, and drumming can reduce depression. Professor Sally Marlow, a mental health specialist at King's College London and BBC Radio 3's first ever researcher in residence argues "music programmes, particularly for children and young people – because most mental health problems start when you're in childhood or adolescence – is much more preventative and gives young people and children a much better chance of a mentally healthy adulthood and life going forwards."

[Read article](#)

Music for recovery

'I listen to jazz and classical music to help me fall asleep at night' - Cathy

'I play percussions for mindfulness and to process my thoughts. Listening to upbeat music also lifts my mood' - Louisa

Experts by experience

Creative Corner

Here we share the creative contributions of experts by experience and students of the college. Attending our courses, including our creative courses, has helped them on their recovery journeys.

Student Art

Dog – by Michelle, expert by experience,

'I found it really helps my mental health to be creative. It keeps me calm and my brain working in a helpful way. I like drawing animals with big personalities that come through and that can make me smile, and also make other people smile when they see them.'

Artwork by Michelle.



Student Poems

Orange (Thank you Wendy Cope)

By Cathy – expert by experience

*Today I bought an orange
not something I often do
and it was rather large
I peeled off the skin in a swirl
Nonchalantly removed the pith
then broke each segment one by one
placed them all on a white tea plate
these were the parts of my life
some good, some not so and some awful
without hesitation
I ate those first*

Recovery

By Holly, Student

*Somewhere along the way
Darkness turned into light,
Isolating turned into engaging,
Negativity turned into positivity,
Long sleeves turned into short sleeves,
Fear turned into hope,
Hurting turned into healing,
Struggles turned into strength,
Pain turned into purpose,
Existing turned into living,
And my life became mine again.*

Why not try one of our recovery focused creative courses:

Art journaling, expressive writing, wellbeing and creativity, writing creativity for wellbeing

[Sign Up](#)

Student Blog

Discover how personal accountability helped Roxanne to make the change that gave her control of her recovery journey

By Letting go it all gets done

by Roxanne, Student, New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College

I have lived with mental health struggles my entire adulthood and so has my partner, so the road to recovery has been a very bumpy ride, in fact, at points, it's been downright ugly. Blaming, conflict, anger and a tonne of resentment were all flavours of the month. In 2022, after years of various different holistic therapies, prescribed drugs, anti-depressants, cognitive behavioural therapy, tried and failed attempts at meditation, lots of books and even some Cranio-Sacral Therapy training, things had improved for sure but I was still experiencing mental health challenges, and all the negative relationships in my personal life remained the same.

'I've done all this work on healing and recovery so why is nothing changing?!' I would ask myself. Put simply, why wasn't I being rewarded for all the effort I had put in?!

Then I came across a **quote from the Tao De Ching* which says, 'by letting go it all gets done'** ...it would be a while until I truly understood its power! After many more months of actively working towards healing, a new thought fell upon me, that if nothing was changing around me then perhaps I could change. A therapist once said to me **'by healing yourself you heal those around you'** and so I decided to embark on a new journey to health... and that journey was called - accountability. I had unknowingly been spending all my efforts on understanding what and who around me needed to change, that I didn't see **it was actually ME that needed to change, as this is the one thing that I can control.**

So I started to learn more about my partner's particular mental health struggles by reading self-help books, I worked on my confidence and started to be more assertive, I was showing more kindness to others, I started to practice proper self-care and most importantly, I learnt healthy boundaries. This was the first time I had really gone inward to face my own negative and in-grained patterns of behaviour, rather than focusing on the external world around me and all the things I couldn't change. **For the first time in my life I felt I had some control over my recovery and magical things began to happen**, just as that therapist has said to me.

The behaviour of those closest to me started to change and my relationships started to rebuild. There were some teething problems initially as people got used to the new version of me but then the transformation was almost overnight. I realised that for years, I had almost been waiting for all the people in my life who had hurt me, to jump out and say, 'We're So Sorry!'. The irony is once I shifted from a 'blame mentality' into an 'accountability mentality', people did say sorry in their own ways and healing conversations could be had. I was approaching these people with compassion, not contempt. Everyone felt heard and I felt much better.

Living a life of accountability not only means asking ourselves 'how do I contribute to my hardships?', but most importantly, it means taking control of our own healing and happiness. We can't control everything, but we can choose how we face our challenges. I hadn't realised I was living a life full of anger and resentment and the only person hurting was me. Sometimes we simply cannot forgive but we can empower ourselves by choosing not to live in the shadow of someone else's wrong doings and seek out the light... 'By Letting Go it All Gets Done'.

* A text for both Philosophical and Religious Taoism

Courses that may help: Self compassion for everyday living, Building Healthy Relationships, Practising self-care and Assertive Communication Skills.

Meet the College Staff

Chris: college registrar

I am likely to be the first person you connect with at this college when you phone, email, enrol or book onto a course. If you need any advice on our courses and how they can aid your recovery, I'm here to help.

I am privileged to get to speak to most students and to hear you talk about your personal recovery journeys. What I love most about my job is seeing the positive impact the college makes on students, so I work hard to encourage and maintain a longer term connection between you and the benefits of the college.



Student council: who are we?

We are a group of experts by experience from the [student development programme](#). We aim to represent the views and needs of all students at the college. Your views matter, so we'd love to hear your thoughts. Please visit the [Student Council page](#) under 'about us' on our [website](#) to find out more.

Student development programme

About the programme

All experts by experience started as students and transitioned through our student development programme. This programme is open to all students who want to learn additional skills, alongside others on their recovery journey, to gain access to opportunities for further development and take up meaningful activities to strengthen and manage their mental health and recovery. Together we can help each other.

[More about the programme](#)

[Student recovery stories](#)

Thank you to our Experts by Experience

Without our experts by experience sharing their lived experience and personal recovery journeys, we wouldn't be running the college as we are: helping thousands of Hertfordshire residents learn how to take control of their mental health.

Our experts help to co-produce and co-facilitate our courses and it's their personal touches that bring our courses to life. Experts by experience help students feel less isolated in their challenges and support students to be more comfortable about being in the room.

And so, we want to thank experts by experience for the amazing job they're doing, and for sharing stories like [this one](#): *"Today I presented to 100 GP practice managers about how the college improved my wellbeing. Six years ago, I didn't even have the self-esteem to contribute to small team meetings, let alone lead or present at larger ones. Thank you, New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College; for the opportunities, for pushing me and for believing in me."*

[Read full story](#)



Inspiring hope, opportunity and control

New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College is delivered by
Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Contact the college

01442 864 966

newleaf.wellbeingcollege@nhs.net

www.newleafcollege.co.uk



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Have your say

As a college everything we do is about co-production – in other words, like this newsletter, we incorporate the thoughts, contributions and opinions of our students, our experts by experience and our Staff. You also have a voice.

So if you would like to contribute to our newsletter, or have any feedback on our website or courses, or you have anything at all you would like to say to us, we would love to hear from you. Help us to do what we do even better.

To contact us please email the college at newleaf.wellbeingcollege@nhs.net or use our [contact us' page](#)

Contact New Leaf Recovery and Wellbeing College (newleafcollege.co.uk)