



Newsletter

No 38

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Dear Students,

Recovery – An Ongoing Journey

Spring is upon us and time to enjoy whatever Easter means to you. There's no doubt about it; we've endured a long, wet winter. However, the rain (however much we despise it) brings growth, beautiful green countryside, food, and our ability to water our gardens in order that they flourish and, of course, wildlife.

This winter I've had a challenging time with my own mental health – it was more than a rain shower, more a torrential downpour of a surprise storm. I was shocked as I thought, "Why has it happened again? What did I do wrong?" And, of course, I did nothing 'wrong,' and it's 'happened'. I have to remind myself a lot about what I've learnt about recovery. It's meant accepting the situation without blaming myself. Asking for help and support. Taking as much responsibility for my own recovery as I can. Taking the very best care of myself such as ensuring I had enough sleep, exercising and eating well – which can be difficult when we're not in a good place. It's been 10 years since I was unwell and 8 since starting up Recovery in Mind. I've come to the conclusion that developing skills such as self-compassion (I've been able to be kind to myself, not giving myself a 'hard time') has been worth the time and effort. I was able to think more positively, accepted that I needed, and received help, 'owned' my difficulties and looked forward not back. So, I've decided to continue developing these skills and mindsets as I don't really know what's around the corner of life. I have recovered relatively quickly this time, and I can safely say that it's due to what I've learnt and practised that I've achieved that.

So, I encourage you all to come to another course, maybe something that's new to you, so that you can give yourself the very best chance of bouncing back from a difficult time or simply maintaining good mental health. On that note, please take a look at the website and all the new courses and opportunities that we have planned for you in the Summer Term.

Happy Easter - enjoy – and we all look forward to seeing you again soon.

Angela and the Recovery in Mind team



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ON A LANE IN SPRING by John Clare

A little land - the brook runs close beside,
And spangles in the sunshine, while the fish glide swiftly by;
And hedges leafing with the green springtide;
From out their greenery the old birds fly,
And chirp and whistle in the morning sun;
The pilewort glitters 'neath the pale blue sky,
The little robin has its nest begun
The grass-green linnets round the bushes fly.
How mild the spring comes in! the daisy buds
Lift up their golden blossoms to the sky.
How lovely are the pingles in the woods!
Here a beetle runs - and there a fly
Rests on the arum leaf in bottle-green,
And all the spring in this sweet lane is seen.



Some Tips for Mental Health Spring Cleaning

In springtime we think about giving our home a deep cleaning to spruce it up and get it ready for the coming year. Have you ever thought of doing the same for your mind? Decluttering your brain is just as important as organizing your home. Here are some tips for mental health spring cleaning.

1. **Start Journaling.** Keep a journal of your thoughts, worries, fears, and upsets. This helps release them from your mind and allows you to see them in black and white on paper so gives you more perspective on them. Alternatively, you can use the journal for capturing any internal monologue and include the positive thoughts too. When you look back at what you have written, you can invariably gain perspective and understand yourself better.

2. **Drop a Bad Habit.** Pick an area of your life that has an impact on your mental health. For many of us, this might be diet or exercise. Make an effort to drop the bad habit and replace it with a healthier option. Instead of lazy Sundays where nothing gets achieved for example, maybe switch to lazy Sunday afternoons after a run and a healthy snack.



3. **Get out and about.** Dust off your walking boots or 'borrow' a friend's dog for a few hours and get outside for some fresh air and to 'blow the cobwebs of winter' away. Nothing refreshes the mind as well as some moderate activity outdoors in the spring sunshine.

4. **Tackle Projects You've Been Putting Off.** We all have a mental list of projects we really need to tackle. Start your "mental health spring cleaning" by writing down all the things that you've been putting off, like repairs to your home or going to the doctor and making the necessary appointments to get everything sorted. Lists are a very useful way of 'holding ideas' for you rather than cluttering your mind with them (or forgetting them).

5. **Build Positive Relationships.** We all have people in our lives who we care for, but with whom we don't have the healthiest or most enjoyable relationships. Instead of spending time prioritizing those people who are more 'hard work', consider dedicating your time to positive friendships/people instead.

6. **Make Gratitude a Priority.** One great way to promote a healthy mind is to take some time to consider everything that you are grateful for. You can do this in several ways. If you'd like to make a daily list, for example, then set aside some time to do the activity every day. You can also take a few moments every day and mentally check off all your blessings.

7. **Kick Negative Thoughts into the 'long grass'.** Chances are good you have enough on your mind without negative thoughts bouncing around. Consciously push those thoughts out and refocus on something positive instead. How about using the mantra 'I can do it!' ICDI

8. **Start a New Hobby.** Consider starting a new hobby or pass-time, to help spend your time constructively. A mind occupied with an interesting activity is a happier one. Be inventive and think out of the box.... or just pick up a jigsaw!



9. **Change Your Perspective.** Accept that you're not perfect and neither is the world around you. Instead of focusing on negativity, look to the moments of progress and joy instead.

10. **Polish up your self-compassion.** For those of you who have attended the RiM self-compassion course, remind yourself of the various issues by re-reading the notes you have. For those who have not done the course, why don't you book onto it (starts 5th June) and take care of yourself by making some time each day for self-care and to meet your own needs as a priority.

Now's a good time to get started on your Mental Health Spring Cleaning! Good luck with it all!

Winter Festival



Thanks to the Pangbourne Rotary Club, 24 students joined us for a Creativity Day at Stockcross Village Hall. The grant, they so kindly gave us, allowed us to invite two wonderful Artists; Diana and Lee who had come all the way from Pembrokeshire.

Diana is an art teacher and ran a fantastic Lino Printing workshop. The other 'guest' trainer was her partner, Lee, who is an illustrator and ran an 'Inking' workshop. Both Lee and Diana were great, and all the students got into the 'flow' and made the most of this opportunity to try something new.

So much was produced, and everyone took something home to be proud of. Thanks also to Helen for organising and delivering a lovely sandwich lunch and for managing all the admin to make the day happen.

I hope, if you were there, that you enjoyed the day as much as the Recovery in Mind staff team did! I'm hoping to be able to offer something similar next winter. It was a special day and I reflected on what a wonderful and supportive community we have developed together.



Get involved with a MH Steering Group

Before I began Recovery in Mind I got involved in all kinds of groups and meetings about Mental Health provision in our area. If anyone is interested in getting involved with a MH Steering group which will include people who, like you, have experienced mental health challenges, please join me at this event. Your experiences, ideas and knowledge of 'Recovery' will make any of you an asset to the work of improving mental health for everyone across West Berkshire. It's where I started and gave me the confidence to move forward with my plans for Recovery in Mind, I hope to see some of you there!

West Berkshire Co-Production Steering Group for West Berkshire Mental Health Forum

- Be part of the mental health conversation.
- It is essential to raise awareness, provide support and promote understanding of mental health issues.
- You and your organisation can help assist and share your experience and knowledge with mental health related topics questions.

The Mental Health Action Group (MHAG) brings together the voluntary and statutory sectors to influence the delivery of parts of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for West Berkshire. The MHAG is a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board, which is a statutory body made of the Council, health services, Healthwatch, voluntary sector and other public sector organisations.



The first meeting on setting up the forum will be open to as many people as we can practically manage but we will probably then want to set up a steering group of about 8 to 10 people, to work through the details. The first meeting is a chance for everyone to say what they would like from the Forum, how, in general terms, they could see it working and to select a steering group.

We have arranged for the first meeting to be held face to face at **Broadway House on Wednesday 27th March, 11am to 12.30pm**. From then on, the group can decide whether it will meet face to face or online.

The steering group will include members of the Mental Health Action Group, people with Lived Experience of mental health challenges and others. Together, they should include people from the statutory and voluntary sectors and the public.

We are aiming to have a diverse and balanced steering group which broadly represents people in West Berkshire with an interest in Mental Health issues. The sorts of thing we are looking for in the steering group are:

- An interest in mental health issues
- Knowledgeable about and involved in the local community
- Prepared to work in groups or committees
- The ability to take a collaborative and constructive approach
- Able to attend meetings
- Able to keep sensitive information confidential

The steering group may only need to meet a few times after the initial meeting, depending how much work there turns out to be, to set up the Forum.

We hope you would like, and are able, to attend the meeting on 27th March. It would be great if you could email rachel.johnson@westberks.gov.uk to let know if you are coming so we know to expect you.

We are looking forward to seeing you there. Angela.

Group Poetry

We ran a new two-part poetry workshop back in January entitled, "New Year, New Beginnings: The Written Word". We used this as an opportunity to reflect together on the year ahead through sharing a few poems and having a go at writing our own. We had a lot of fun playing with words and experimenting with different styles of poetry and thought you might enjoy reading some of the group poems that we wrote together.

We wrote this acrostic poem, where the first letter of each line spells out a word:

What a gift of a beautiful new day,
Icy and cold, tempting to play,
Nippy and skippy all the way.
Together we wait for spring to arrive,
Eternally grateful for things to survive,
Room for everything to flourish and thrive.

Maybe you could write your own acrostic poem? How about on the subject of: **S P R I N G ?**

We also took a short poem by Rumi and extended it by adding our own ideas.

So, the original lines were:

It's good to leave each day behind
Like flowing water, free of sadness.
Yesterday is gone and its tale told,
Today new seeds are growing.

In our extended version it became:

It's good to leave each day behind
Like flowing water, free of sadness.
Yesterday is gone and its tale told.
Today new seeds are growing.
It is a time to start sowing,
Each moment is a fresh start.
So, let's live our lives to the full,
Until we depart.

Finally, we wrote our own group limerick too:

A new year dawns, we start again,
Time for me to pick up my pen.
Let's dream our dreams,
And follow our themes.
All will be well, hallelujah, amen!

Limericks can be fun to write, since they are often funny (and sometimes rude!) nonsense rhymes. We found it a bit of a challenge sticking to the structure of 5 lines, with lines 1,2 and 5 all rhyming and being longer, and lines 3 and 4 shorter and also rhyming.

Of course, not all poetry has a set structure or rhyming scheme. You could write a poem in any way you choose, rhyming or not. It's a great means of self-expression and can be fun to play around with words and phrases. One of our peers, Lynette, shared a very helpful phrase with us: "off mind, on paper". Writing down our thoughts and ideas can be very helpful.

So, why not give it a go? We'd love to read anything you feel you'd like to share - maybe we could include it in our next newsletter?! Cath

Winter Creativity

Our winter creativity session this term took a different approach to previous creativity sessions. We all worked together on a collective piece, starting at one section, and moving around the table at regular(ish!) intervals, so that everyone contributed to each part. Everyone embraced the process and became fully absorbed - so much so that we needed to run a second session to complete the project! It was exciting to see the painting develop, as we each added bits, sometimes painting new sections, other times adding to what had already been painted. I think it's fair to say that we all enjoyed the collaborative process in a relaxed and sociable environment.

After enjoying the painting as a whole, we then divided it up into sections, and each student took a piece home with them, which the whole group had contributed to.



We wanted to share our experience with the rest of you too, and hope that you might feel inspired to give it a go yourself if we run something similar in the future.



Spring by Arthur Hugh Clough

This aged earth that each new spring
Comes forth so young, so ravishing
In summer robes for all to see,
Of flower, and leaf, and bloomy tree,
For all her scarlet, gold, and green,
Fails not to keep within unseen
That inner purpose and that force
Which on the untiring orbit's course
Around the sun, amidst the spheres
Still bears her thro' the eternal years.



Summer Term Courses



Looking ahead to the summer term which starts after the Easter break, we thought that we'd take this opportunity to highlight some of the courses we have timetabled. All the courses are available to students who have completed the Welcome to Recovery foundation course and can be booked via the website [Step 2: All Courses | Recovery in Mind](#)

Reading for Recovery - join Gillian & Cath at the library for a 6-week reading course exploring lots of different texts together. All the material that will be used is new and the course starts on Tuesday 16th April.

Outside Painting Creativity - two different opportunities to paint outside on canvas at Shaw House (16th April) and Thatcham Nature Reserve (23rd April). All materials will be provided, and we do have an indoor back up option should the weather not be kind!

Recovery Street Taster Workshop - A chance to understand more about this course ahead of us hopefully running the full course later in the year. Thursday 18th April and 9th May.

What is this thing called Self-compassion? - Come and find out about this subject on 30th April before signing up for the 4-week course in June.

Assertively Saying No - A one-off workshop on Tuesday 21st May with Fiona and Cath. Learn new techniques and ideas to enable you to start to assertively say 'NO'!

Wellbeing Walk - Wednesday 22nd May at Thatcham Lakes. Nature can promote health and wellbeing. It can fascinate us, calm us and give strength to overcome difficult challenges. This guided walk will give you the opportunity to reflect on your senses, thoughts and feelings. The stroll will pause at given points to consider your senses and have a discussion.

Self-Compassion Course - This 4-week Self Compassion course will provide an understanding of why humans struggle with it, how we can learn it and a set of very useful tools to develop it within ourselves. The course starts on Wednesday 5th June.

As always, if you have any questions about any of the courses or would like some help in deciding which one to do, then do get in touch with us helen@recoveryinmind.org

External Links

Looking after your diet. Despite the necessity of **chocolate eating** at this time of year, here is the link for a very interesting article on: How diet can affect your mental wellbeing.

[How to eat to boost your mental health](#)



Springtime Tunes

[Here Comes The Sun \(Remastered 2009\) - YouTube](#)

[The Beach Boys - Spring Vacation \(Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

[Billie Holiday - April In Paris \(1956\) - YouTube](#)

[Nina Simone - Feeling Good \(Official Video\) - YouTube](#)

[Vivaldi - Spring - YouTube](#)

[American Authors - Best Day Of My Life \(Official Video\) - YouTube](#)

[Robert Schumann: Symphony No.1 in B flat major Op.38 "Spring" IV.Allegro animato e grazioso - YouTube](#)

[Spring - George Shearing, John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers - Bing video](#)

[Dawn Chorus & Spring Flowers - blooming marvelous - YouTube](#)



Further Help and Support

If you are struggling with your mental health and feel that you need further help & support here are some contact numbers for you:

West Berkshire Community Mental Health Team- 0118 904 3200

CRHTT (Crisis Response and Home Treatment Team)- 0300 365 9999

Samaritans - 116 123

NHS - 111

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.