

Thurrock Recovery College NEWSLETTER



This time we are talking about something really important and exciting – DIVERSITY.

Welcome back to our October newsletter.

In today's world diversity it's a source of strength, creativity and growth. By embracing different backgrounds, new ideas and experiences we can create a happier and more connected world.

Diversity can be found in many aspects of our day-to-day life: culture, gender, sexual orientation, identity, age, religion, diversity of abilities, thoughts, and opinions.

We can find diversity all around us – in the people we meet, the environments

we live in, and the ideas we share. It's what makes the world rich, interesting, and full of possibilities.

Diversity is not just about recognising differences but appreciating them and understanding the power of bringing diverse perspectives together, whether in our personal lives, at work, or within our communities.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Recovery College newsletter and these stories and insights inspire you, spark new idea and remind you of the power of diversity.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

[Community Updates](#)

[Volunteer Spotlight](#)

[Staff Profile Highlights](#)

[Distractions](#)

[Yoga Pose of the Month](#)

[Articles by our Students](#)



Katie Ireland
Peer Learning Support Worker

Dear Readers,

Although what I have created isn't perfect, it's sort of the point that nothing can be 100% perfect. This artwork highlights that and I'm completely okay with that. I see the beauty in imperfections.

This month's theme is around Diversity, and I will explain the reasoning behind why I created this artwork. I drew a skull because sometimes when I think about 'Diversity' I get the feeling of it being a little bit of a taboo subject, which in turn can feel alienating.

I created a zip in the middle of the skull to represent that to be diverse, we need to unpeel some of the layers that we protect. It's also about owning our 'authenticity', it's okay to be different. It's about acknowledging that we are all different and finding the strengths that we have as an individual, working together as a community, and celebrating and respecting each other's differences.

This leads on to 'be kind', it's a lesson I have learned because as humans, we can often 'judge a book by its cover'.

Whatever I do, I do it with kindness even if I feel others don't necessarily deserve it. We can't know what other people are dealing with, but if I treat everyone with kindness, I know I'm not potentially making other people's lives worse.



My kindness for that day could be just what someone needed.

The black and white checkers idea came from that I some time's have tunnel vision and only see the black and white, I miss out the grey area which is vitally important, the grey area helps me try on a different pair of glasses and see thing's from a different perspective.

The headphones represent another version of 'diversity' in it's simplest form, we all have different interests in music but we acknowledge and accept that, so my question is, **why is it hard to accept other version's of 'Diversity'?**

POSE OF THE MONTH

WARRIOR II – Embrace Your Inner Strength

By Diana – Yoga Tutor



“ Stand TALL in Warrior II, and let your strength and courage rise with every breath ”

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens and stretches the hips.
- Strengthens the shoulders.
- Boosts confidence and power.
- Builds endurance.

Contraindications: Hip injuries – adjust feet placement to reduce strain.

This pose can be performed with/without a chair.

Entering the Pose:

- 1** From Warrior I, keep your right knee aligned over your right ankle and rotate your torso to the side. If starting from Downward Facing Dog, step your right foot between your hands, pivot your back heel down, and rise into Warrior II.
- 2** Extend your arms out to the sides, forming a "T" shape with your shoulders, palms facing down. Relax your shoulders away from your ears.
- 3** Firmly press the inner and outer edges of both feet into the mat, gently squeezing them toward each other to engage your hips and stabilize your lower body.
- 4** Gaze forward over your right middle finger.
- 5** Draw your lower belly in and up towards your heart to activate core support.

Alternatives & Modifications:

- Adjust the distance between your feet to vary the intensity of the pose.
- You can lower your back knee if you wish to.
- Bring your hands to heart centre to reduce strain on your shoulders.
- Bend your wrists upward for an added wrist stretch.

Exiting the Pose: Transition mindfully to poses like Peaceful Warrior or Humble Warrior.

Muscles Engaged: Arms, shoulders, entire back, hamstrings, chest, hips, psoas, quadriceps.

Suggested Hold Duration: 1-5 breaths.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE:
**“Nothing ventured,
nothing gained”**

Hi, I'm Claire.

I am a volunteer and past student at the Recovery Collage.

I am an adventurer and love to travel, I have been lucky enough to have traveled to many countries. The photo of me above was taken in a cafe in Peru, where I bought the hat I am wearing; it looked good at the time (to me anyway), plus it was a godsend to keep me warm. I had underestimated the low temps as traveling to higher points in the Andes mountains was a little chilly.

I moved back to England recently after living in Southern Spain for a few years. I will miss the new friends I met there, the community spirit, the relaxed lifestyle, and of course the blue skies.

However, it is time for the next chapter in my life whatever that might be... I have recently taken a Digital Marketing Course and am excited to put my skills into action, as I go it alone venturing into Freelancing.

I wanted to give back to the College for helping me years ago, so here I am living proof that with a little bit of help, you can go on to achieve good things and fulfill your life.

In my past dark times with depression, one thing that has always stuck with me and I still do to this day is to write down any of my worries in a notebook. This writing technique came about through one of the Recovery College's courses. I would write for 10 minutes or more at a time.

It helped me to get all those thoughts out of my head, make sense of it, validate it, and move on. It was almost like talking to someone, but no one else would ever read it. Plus the bonus is that you do not have to worry that you are burdening someone with your worries.

Going along to one of the courses also made me feel normal at a time when I felt anything but normal, so I am thankful for that.

**We are all different.
Wouldn't it be boring...
if we were all the same?
I think so.**



Gender Identity

I'm CJ (they/them), I'm a therapist at Inclusion Thurrock who specialises in gender, sex, and relationship diversity with a particular interest in gender identity. I run workshops for staff at Inclusion Thurrock and give talks and lectures on the subject.

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS I OFTEN GET ASKED:

What is the difference between sex and gender?

Our sex is assigned to us at birth based on our external anatomy and tends to be what is written on our birth certificates, whereas our gender identity is an internal sense of self and may not always match our assigned sex at birth.

What is gender identity?

Gender is biopsychosocial:

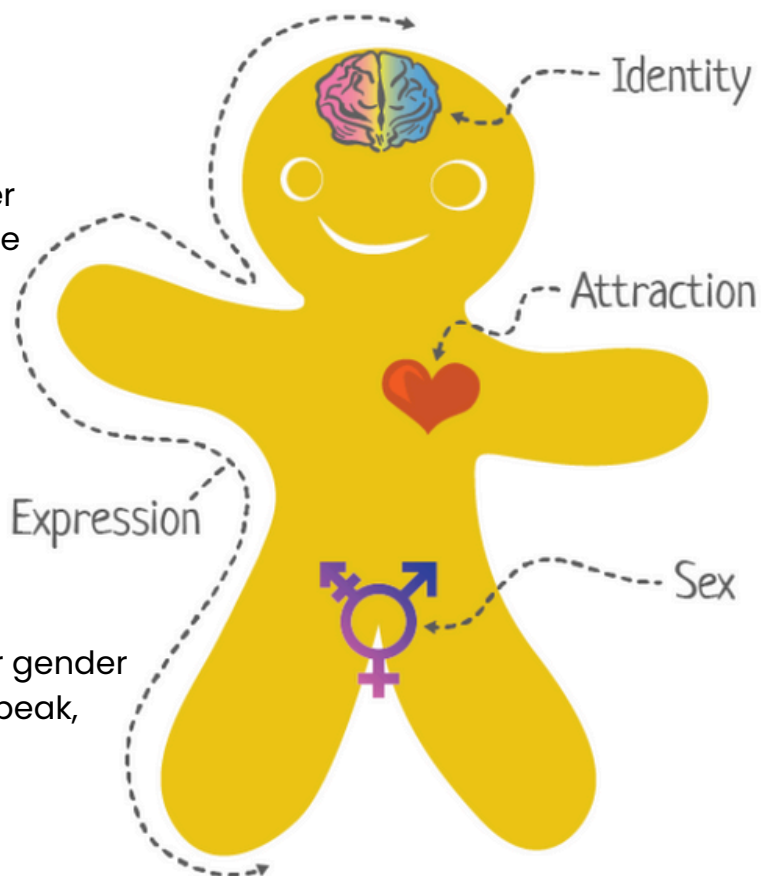
- **Biological** – how we embody our gender
- **Psychological** – our personal experience of gender and felt a sense of self (this develops at around 3-5 ys of age)
- **Social** – how we express our gender can be impacted by social, cultural, and life circumstances

Gender includes aspects of:

- **Identity** – who we know ourselves to be
- **Roles** – expectations of us based on our gender e.g. how we might be expected to act, speak, and interact with people
- **Expression** – how we present ourselves e.g. clothing, hairstyles, name, pronouns

What does cisgender mean?

Cis is the Latin prefix for 'on the same side as' and cisgender is the term used for people who identify with their assigned sex at birth, for example, someone who is assigned male at birth who identifies as a man.



What does transgender mean?

Trans is the Latin prefix for 'on the other side'. If someone's gender identity doesn't match their assigned sex at birth, they may identify with the term transgender, for example, a person who was assigned female at birth who identifies as a man.

Some people don't identify with being male or female and may prefer the term non-binary. Non-binary people may also relate to the term transgender while others might not.

For some gender may feel more expansive, like a galaxy. Have you heard the saying, 'Men are from Mars and women are from Venus'? For some there is more to gender than just Mars and Venus, there is an entire galaxy to explore. There can be masculine and feminine, but there is also everything in between and beyond. For some gender isn't important to them at all.

But isn't sex binary?

Sex isn't always as binary as we might think. Intersex people have variations in sex characteristics, e.g. chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia, that differ from the typical binary of male and female, having attributes of both sexes or neither. Being intersex is as common as having red hair or being left-handed.

Trans and non-binary people make up around 0.5% of the UK population and, for such a small percentage of the population, are currently experiencing a lot of media and political attention. Your trans and non-binary friends, family, colleagues and peers may need some extra support at the moment. I'm sure they will appreciate you taking the time to deepen your understanding of gender.

Some questions to leave you with...

Have you thought much about your own gender identity?

How do you feel about your gender identity after reading this article?

Can you think of any stereotypes and assumptions you might have been taught about gender roles?

How has gender impacted (or not) your experiences in life?

Here are some resources should you want to explore this topic further:

What we do mean by Trans or Non-Binary? - The Rainbow Project (rainbow-project.org)

What it means to be non-binary - LGBT Foundation

Book - How to understand your gender - Rewriting The Rules (rewriting-the-rules.com)

Workbook - Zines - Rewriting The Rules (rewriting-the-rules.com)



DIVERSITY



MANY PATHS
SEEN FROM **DIFFERENT**
ANGLES
CHANGE **VIEWS**

CELEBRATE
DIVERSITY



Artwork by Louise



Make Your OWN Footprint



Hello from Marvel and Duncan. The last time we shared with you we talked about the importance of “smelling roses and seeing trees”; in other words, stop and rethink about what is happening around you and what action you might take. “Make your own footprint” is a further possibility; how we respond to others whose actions may affect us? Let us explain through personal examples what we mean.

My parents said they loved me and I’m sure they did. However, my mother openly said to all present on my 40th birthday celebration that they “had really wanted a girl, to be named Elizabeth”. My mother added to this comment by bringing along the baby girl dress meant for Elizabeth; which she then proceeded to display with great humour. At the time I just dismissed this “party pooper” as no more than my eccentric mother being “on stage” again!

Over the years this statement has come to the surface of my life a number of times. Why has this comment by my mother bothered me? I thought I would spend time with Marvel and see what he thinks.

Marvel and I often walk together. It occurred to me as I was watching him that his viewpoint was; seeing legs, sniffing, playing, finding a place to poo and wee and then straining his neck upwards to see people and other dogs of all colours, race and breed. This reality didn’t seem to bother him, unless it was a completely black dog (so he could not see their eyes) which made him very wary until introduced, then it was playtime! Marvel wanted to be friends.

Continued on next page...

...Continued from previous page

Marvels' reaction to other dogs of course led me to meet and talk with their humans. Like Marvel I met all kinds of people when out walking. We all have our interests; mine is singing and music. There are TV programmes all about discovering new voices. Sometimes the voice is not what is expected (refer to America's got talent: Richard Goodhall). The same applies to dog owners and walkers also from every colour, race and creed. I have met people who seem to enjoy a chat; others very shy, some in a rush, others quiet and a bit solitary; and the conversation isn't always about our dogs! Clearly there are times when people are worried perhaps finding life a challenge.

I have had the most unexpected conversations when walking with Marvel; e.g. understanding religions of the world, Brexit and its implications, talking about medical problems, attitude of the Police to Black teenage boys, living in Grays as a Gay person (both be supported and vilified); and Homelessness. Dog walking is full of the varied experiences and differences in our lives!!

One of the greatest experiences of my life is being a parent. The challenges, expectations and differences in raising children to adulthood is probably the greatest example of our humanity.

Marvel has led my thinking about my mothers' comments to conclude that ... "If you only walk in other people's footprints, you will never make your own."

My reaction to this saying; is a feeling of liberation with a sense of determination to be my own person. Yes, I do want to make my own footprints in life. I do not have to follow what is expected of me. I do want to be friends with and respect others (just like Marvel) and sometimes I need to be cautious to protect myself. Once again, thanks Marvel.

I will end with a view to next months' Newsletter. I am aware that making your own path in life can be hazardous. When at work I witnessed a man become so anxious and depressed that he took his own life, a most awful experience. With my colleagues at INCLUSION we would like to talk particularly about Men's Mental health in November.

Faceless Shadows

Call Me Dave - Volunteer

Once more my eyelids flutter open
and I lie there lost and broken,
paralysed, frozen, thoughts unspoken,
shadow of some unnamed fear.

In the dark my thoughts and feelings
stagger like a drunkard: reeling, tender,
unprepared for dealing with a future I
can't bear.

Accusing eyes and angry voices
raised in protest at poor choices of
paths I travelled through the years.

Alone I stand exposed and craven,
crushed and hollow, sad, and beaten
and yet again the unnamed demon
comes unbidden to the fore.

Repeatedly that beast betrays me, I
stand helpless as it flays me, leads a
baying mob to slay me, taking all –
demanding more. The darkness of my
soul engulfs me, traps me, holds me,
ties me, binds me; repeating all the
nights before.

"Please stop" I whisper to the
shadows, "take away this endless
sorrow, I do not want to face
tomorrow. This torment's more than I
can bear."

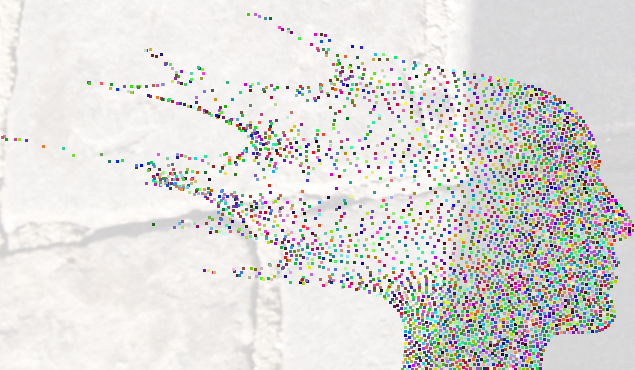
But only silence meets my pleading;
faceless shadows: dark, unheeding,
and in return my fears are seeding
fertile ground to breed more fear.

Scarred wounds from long ago are
opened, shards of happiness are
broken. Legions of old demons
reappear.

In vain I try to strike a bargain with the
harbinger of Satan, "take me now" I
beg the horseman, "take me now to
walk another shore."

That genderless and shapeless
monster will not entertain my banter,
preferring yet to spread vile canker; I
hate it not yet I myself deplore.

Continued on next page...



...Continued from previous page

It seems to me my very presence is detrimental and a nuisance and my demise can be the only cure.

Yet in my hope of moving forward, helplessly I e'er look backwards, 'til every detail I've remembered of a faux pas many years before. A slight of miniscule proportion grows arms and legs, thickens, coarsens.

Ridiculous! Beyond all reason! Yet blames me to the very core. Helplessly I try to capture the smallest memory of rapture, knowing it will lead me to a cure.

But joy in all its forms eludes me; shuts and bars its door – excludes me.

The illness in my mind secludes me, keeps me from vicissitudes of mood. And all my yearning for the morrow brings only dread and yet more sorrow.

Strength for this cannot be borrowed; its lonely burden has to be endured. And through the night the clock ticks onward, yet my mind is firmly anchored in the past where it cannot be cured.

And when, at last, the daylight quickens, I rise and dress – for duty beckons. I fabricate a new deception, with mask of nonchalant cheer.

No-one can know the ghosts that haunt me, the sneering memories that taunt me, nor the nameless fears that daunt me when outwardly I do not have a care.

This masquerade of pose and posture serves as suit of flimsy armour to mask the lonely shame of my despair!





When I was diagnosed with ADHD and began my medication I became, in a sense, 'aware' because the medication revealed the aspects of my thought processes that were not neurotypical.

I found it intriguing at first. Everything was easier. Things I had struggled with before, such as staying focused and 'on subject,' were now taking little effort. It was fascinating.

But after about six months after first using the medication, I saw myself as two different people. It felt like my mind was occupied by two entities: one of them, an imposter with no feelings or personality pretending to be me, and the other, my creative, spiritual self, locked away in a dark sound-proofed room, alone and ignored. It was awful.

I was confronted with two unpleasant choices. I could be super-efficient at work and go through life without ever having another creative thought, or I could be my true self and fail at living in society.

Ten years ago, I made the decision to stop taking the medication. I spoke to my psychiatrist first, who confirmed it was safe for me to do so, but he warned me there would be consequences. He was right!

The fallout that happened would fill several books I imagine, but not relevant here. What is relevant is that when I was on the medication, I saw what I needed to do to bring my thought processes, my 'tics', under control.

For example, in my 'pre-med' days my desk would be messy with files I was working on, I had no system, I could not stick to routines, and I could only hyper-focus on one project at a time.

Despite this though, my abilities made up for it so, as far as I was concerned, I was 'normal', and I suppose as far as everybody else was concerned, I was messy and disorganised, but otherwise willing and capable. No big deal, but... the medication changed that.

Continued on next page...



The medication removed the adjustments naturally developed through a lifetime to compensate for the areas that needed more effort.

The best way to explain what it felt like to come off the medication would be to have you envision driving your car down a road, safe and content, and suddenly the road falls away on the passenger side and two tyres are over the chasm. Miraculously the car is still driving.

It has been ten years now and I am living with the consequences of my choices, good and bad. The story I intend to share is my experience of living with ADHD pre-medicated, on medication then living without the medication afterwards, and the conscious adjustments I have made to keep that car on the road.

It is about how I used the information I found out about myself to make my life work better for me.

ARTICLE BY IMWECHETE

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects a person's ability to focus, control their behavior, and regulate their emotions.

Symptoms include:

- Inattention: Difficulty paying attention
- Hyperactivity: Having too much energy or moving and talking too much
- Impulsivity: Acting without thinking or having difficulty with self-control

Regular physical activity, sleep, and stress reduction techniques can help improve ADHD symptoms.

If you think you may have ADHD, you can speak to a doctor. They can discuss your concerns and refer you for a specialist assessment if needed.

KINDNESS BINGO

You can cut the individual boxes out below and pop them in an envelope, then every morning pull one piece out and try and follow the instructions.

Smiled at a stranger	Wrote a thank you note for the mail delivery person	Sent flowers to someone who needed cheering up	Offered a tissue to a person that needed it	Bought a meal for someone that did not have their wallet
Left a surprise gift for a friend	Stayed in my pajamas all day to read or watch my favorite movies	Baked treats for a neighbor	Gave money to a person in need	Made a personalized music playlist for a friend
Wrote a positive note to myself for inspiration	Put a surprise note in my child's or partner's lunch	FREE SPACE	Offered my phone to a stranger to make a needed call	Watered my neighbor's plants
Cleaned up a mess that wasn't mine	Shoveled snow from my neighbor's driveway	Shopped locally instead of at a big box store	Surprised a friend with a note of appreciation	Welcomed a newcomer to join my group
Cleaned up a hiking trail	Kept a gratitude journal	Put stray grocery carts where they belong	Unexpectedly replaced something that was broken	Used reusable water bottles

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
 FOUNDATION



Ways to Wellbeing: Learn (online) **Tuesday 1 of October 12-2pm**

This course aims to define the term 'Learning', discuss the benefits of learning and some of the current barriers. Students will also have the opportunity to reflect on ways in which they have been learning in specific circumstances, explore different ways in which they can learn and identify ways of improving their wellbeing by learning.



Ways to Wellbeing: Be active (online) **Tuesday 8 of October 12-2pm**

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. But it doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good - slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise. In this course we aim to provide you with support, tips, techniques and skills to improve your wellbeing.



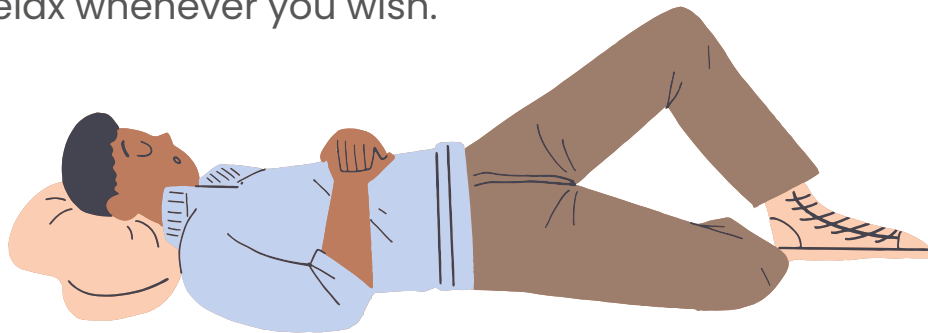
Mindfulness Practice **Friday 4 of October 10 - 11.30am, Grays** **Tuesday 15 of October, 1 - 2.30pm, Grays**

This workshop will offer you more experience with Mindfulness practice at a personal level. Mindfulness is experiential and a skill that needs to be performed often & regularly. You are going to experience the benefits of mindfulness yourself together with others in a truly heartfelt way. By the end of the 1 hour you will be able to draw on more practical time to be present in the moment via chosen 2 different short exercises (up to 10 minutes) per experience.



My Rested Self Sleep (online), Thursday 3, 10 and 17 October 10am – 12pm

Are you needing a little time to relax? Sit back, turn your camera off and join us for a guided visualisation. This is a one hour online, experiential workshop which includes a 20 minute visualisation in which we lead you in an exercise of imaging and designing your own personalised, safe, outdoor space in which you can relax whenever you wish.



Understanding Depression

Friday 11, 18 & 25 October 11am – 1pm, South Ockendon



‘Feeling low’ is something most of us experience from time to time and it is a natural part of being human.

However, when these feelings become more severe, begin to take hold of your life and just won’t go away, it may be something more serious like ‘depression’. Depression is common but for those who are diagnosed, it can be a frightening and isolating condition. You cannot just ‘snap out of it’, it can be hard to understand and may present differently in different people.

The aim of the workshop is to explore the facts and realities of depression, how it is diagnosed, treated and a few tips on how you can manage it or support someone you care about who may experience depression. In this safe environment you can share your experience, learn from and help others.

Visualisation for Relaxation (online)

Monday 7 October, 11am - 12pm

This is a one hour online, experiential workshop which includes a 20 minute visualisation in which we lead you in an exercise of imaging and designing your own personalised, safe, outdoor space in which you can relax whenever you wish. We catch up afterwards and signpost you to other useful tools.



Mindful Walk

Thursday 10 of October, 10 - 11.30am, South Ockendon.

Thursday 24 of October, 10 - 11.30am, Chafford Hundred

Walking has so many benefits. It can improve our mood, reduce stressful feelings, benefit our physical health and help us become more aware of our surroundings. Join us for an outdoor walk in nature, where we will undertake a gentle pace along a designated route.



Progressing with Visualisation - The Ocean

Wednesday 23 of October, 6-7.30am

This is a one & a half hour single, workshop & is available to students who have previously completed the Visualisation for Relaxation, Mindfulness Walk or Creating Mindfulness courses. This progression includes a longer guided visualisation in which students build upon the relaxing outdoor space previously designed, as well as experiencing further mindful relaxation techniques.



Introduction to Anxiety (online) **Monday 14 and 21 of October, 10am - 12pm**

Are you interested in exploring a different perspective of anxiety? Are you curious about the impact of your wider environment & lifestyle on the experience of anxiety? This 2 session online course complements our in-person Understanding Anxiety course, by approaching the subject differently. It can serve as a great follow-on or introduction to the subject. We will explore nonmedical triggers for anxiety such as sleep, lifestyles, diet and the time of year. We will offer some experiential learning to support thriving with anxiety.



Thriving with Neurodiversity: An Intro (online) **Tuesday 22 of October, 11am - 2.30pm**

Are you interested in dyslexia, ADHD or Autism? Do you identify as Neurodivergent, or support someone who does?

Would you like to explore a strengths-based understanding of neuro-diversity, or connect with other members of the neuro-divergent community?

This single-session online course, serves as an introduction to the topic and will include two break times. A key aim of the course will be to recognise and celebrate our innate capabilities and potential strengths. We will also discuss awareness of our individual challenges and the strategies that support us, encouraging acceptance through valuing our unique qualities and individual selves. Students will have the opportunity to attend follow-on courses, which further explore ADHD, dyslexia and Autism, when available.



 **mind** Thurrock and Brentwood

Are you an Expert by Experience ?

What stories do you have to share? What could you bring to the conversation around mental health? Be part of the process to develop our new lived experience panel.



Join us today!

Scan the QR code or
Tel: 01368 391411
Email: livedexperience@tbmind.org.uk





SCAN ME

Scan the QR code below or visit
www.recoverycollege.inclusionthurrock.org
to read more!



Contact Us!

Email: Thurrockcollege@mpft.nhs.uk

Call: 01375 809 708

X @ThurrckRCollege

f Inclusion Thurrock Recovery College