

Stories

To help celebrate our 5th Birthday, the Mind Recovery College™ extended an invitation to anyone associated with the college who wanted to contribute their thoughts about what the college has meant to them. We hope you enjoy reading their contribution.

A couple of years ago I attended the “I choose to be happy” course at the Mind Recovery College.



*I discovered happiness is a choice.
Nothing will make you happy until
you choose to be happy.*

I have taken this approach with me in my day to day life, therefore I *chose* to be happy!!

Thank you to the MRC team – Happy 5th Birthday celebrations.

-Christine

Happy birthday MRC!

"Mental ill health is a/my pathway to healing, self-discovery - love.
Thank you Mind for having been a part of my journey."

-Anonymous

Happy Birthday MRC!

Thank you to each one of you and thank you for being a team of creativity, vibrancy and always so welcoming to us.

-Salma

Self-care

I find this course is perfect for me at the moment. It is going hand in hand with what I am learning about myself and what I am utilising for myself. It has led to a lot of WOW moments.

-Anonymous

Mind Recovery College is a safe place, it almost becomes a hallowed place where we talk about real things, the things that matter!

Mind Recovery College helps us re-train our minds, it helps us to be gentle with our mind and thought. It helps us look at how we feel and honour those feelings.

I feel privileged to be able to access Mind Recovery College. Maybe attending Mind Recovery College is an upside of having a mental health issue.

Mind Recovery College is a place where you can hear amazing stories and even better that it is face to face in real time. Where else can you hear these stories?! Stories of life. It's like being around the campfire without the campfire!

It is honest, sometimes raw, yet safe and nurturing. I learn, I think, I am challenged, I am supported to try other options. It can teach us how to honour our feelings. It humbles me, it can give me routine, it can make my week better. I make friends.

Mind Recovery College is a tool I use to self-care and to ground myself. It assists me to honour my sensitivities. To honour that sometimes I feel too much and that this is OK.

Mind Recovery College is stimulating, I can't help but be in the moment. At the end of a session I usually feel freer.

-Christina

After experiencing distress adjusting to living independently & facing loneliness, I worked hard at overcoming my fears. Then, with the Recovery College assisting me I developed the Being happy with your living situation course. I shared what I have learnt about navigating finances, discovering community supports, spending quality alone time and helpful resources.

The Mind Recovery College is so important for those of us living with mental ill health. It provides an ongoing resource and supportive self-directed education system, whilst enabling people to share what works for them.

With mental health services closing now more than ever, the Recovery College is a safe and inclusive space to learn and grow at one's own pace.

Sharing my experience was empowering and uplifting. After developing the course I was inspired to start a Facebook Page sharing my experiences of abuse and recovery through poetry (search @iwrite4rights on Facebook)

-Lisa

Author and Poet

I just want to say a big THANK YOU to the Mind Recovery College and staff for the fabulous work that you do!

I thoroughly enjoyed attending the classes and have grown to become a better person. I have learnt SO VERY MUCH. Plus, making friends with the participants and some have become very special to me!

The only sadness that I have is that there will not be that many classes available in Cheltenham anymore. But, hey, that is life! Have to accept the "good" and the "bad"! Looking forward to attending any future classes that are in Cheltenham and GESAC.

-Gladys

I'm thankful for Mind Australia as it helped me to regain confidence but apart from that I was always made to feel that I was a worthwhile person and my contribution was always well received.

All the very best for the future.

Kind regards

Felicity 🙋

Before the Mind Recovery College I was too afraid to speak...to truly speak my truth. And now I speak and laugh and hug, it is a wonderful thing. 20 years in depressionville is a hard thing to admit (even now it is hard to write) and it was the Mind Recovery College and Mind that started to open up my world. Our facilitator is open and honest. The facilitator brings her experience of mental ill health including the light and the dark and that helps us as participants to speak of our own experience. Our facilitator creates a safe space. To be vulnerable and honest in a safe space can allow others to feel comfortable to be vulnerable also; this is when growth and understanding happens. I feel like I am creating a strong foundation for myself and I thank Recovery College for that.

P.S For me connection has been so important to recovery; the "no man is an island" quote *from John Donne / About a boy* resonates strongly for me

-Jane, Wodonga

I found this course and the facilitators and the participant's information to be very helpful and felt very safe and comfortable.

-Anonymous

The courses have provided me with inspiration for my future mental health-the hope that I can feel better and stay well with the right combination of strategies.

-Carmen

Letting go

Autumn time is here

Dry and brittle, brown and gold,

Falling all around.

Swirling, twirling, spinning leaves

Resting on the ground.

"Let go, let go"

The wind whispers through the trees,

"Let go of those branches that you no longer need"

So, continue on your journey now

Feeling refreshed and anew

With branches that still hold on tight

And worries that are few.

Original piece,

Written by

Me....

Tricia

I hope you enjoy my poem

Congratulations to Mind Recovery College!! Five years old, it's amazing how far you've come. My experiences with Recovery College started out when I was asked if I would be interested in doing a coproduction of my own design and ideas. This was back in the college's infancy and I was thrilled to be a part of such a forward thinking program.

I did a presentation called Motivation and Mental Health. It was such rewarding experience, thinking back, to be able to share ideas and offer people suggestions and information on how to access resources in the community and how to build on goals and self-improvement with the main premise always being moving forward and trying new things.

I really enjoyed the fact that the Mind Recovery College promotes brainstorming ideas in the classes and encourages all participants to have a say and make sure everyone gets something useful from each class that is run.

I have also attended Recovery College sessions on Mindfulness, Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence, How to be Happy and information about the upcoming NDIS. I just want to thank Mind for providing such a stimulating and progressive program and having watched them go from a small concern to a very successful group of programs has been amazing. I also want to congratulate all involved and know how much hard work has been done in the process thank you all for your efforts and what a great encouragement to people with mental health issues. Because after all life is a bit of a seesaw and even with problems if you have some tools and guidance to get you through it can make the hard times a bit easier to cope with.

Congratulations again Mind, and may you go forward positively in the future too!



-Maree

The grief and loss course has really helped me deal with my own personal grief and loss and is helping me understand a good friend's grief and loss giving me some capacity to be there for her.

-Rodney

[Recovery College] created a safe environment to share. Learnt from each other's experience, learnt new information.

-Anonymous

[There is] no judgement, no masks, very comfortable. Easy to express yourself.

-Anonymous

I have attended a number of courses at both Glynde and Mile End.

The consistent aspect for all these Courses has been the willingness of all Presenters to consider the needs of each person in the Class. I well remember the first class I attended and that it was a huge struggle for me to attend, let alone to participate. Whilst that day I only contributed in the introductions to the rest of the class, at the end of the Session I didn't feel remotely as nervous as when I first walked into the room.

Subsequently, I've witnessed Recovery College Presenters being empathetic, sincere, caring, considerate, and humorous as appropriate, thoughtful and encouraging.

I now recommend the Recovery College to my Peers for their consideration.

I look forward to attending future Courses in the Recovery College as they contribute to my recovery and the management of my mental ill health.

-Graham

A THOUGHT TO THINK ABOUT - TOOLS OF CHANGE

Life is hard

Life is a challenge – mental health is often a casualty of this challenge – mental illness is often the outcome of this challenge but do we need to allow ourselves, to allow others, to define us by the many labels that make up the mishmash of mental illness, labels that can see us as being less competent, less able. Being less.

For so long many of us have passively taken on this role and accepted these labels no one should have to face the chaos of mental illness alone yet how many of us feel we are without worth consumed with shame and despair. How many of us condemn ourselves to isolation for we actually believe the propaganda that attaches itself to these labels.

Then comes the struggle of allowing ourselves to move beyond our beliefs

What happens when we say with courage that we need a service but when the service is provided we do not access it.

Question - why is this? Does this fall back onto the promotion of the service? Or is there a hiccup in the communication? Why is there this gap between needs – services – and accessing these services? Maybe it is to do with the emotions around the strong disempowering abilities attached to these labels, the sense of nothingness. This maybe so but we need to stand up and acknowledge our selfness: we are who we are, we are individuals and we have the right to be.

I see MIND as an art supplier offers a platform, a studio for learning. For finding our feet. For discovering, for many of us for the first time, who we truly are. Discovering our worth. I see this as invaluable. We all need to opportunity to learn. For me at least if I stop learning I stop growing. Food and Mood. Peer Work, Anxiety, Disclosure and Grief and Loss are just some of the courses offered at the Recovery College at Glynde and Mile End in SA.

And it is not just the learning of knowledge on an academic level but as I see it gives us room to grow and develop beyond the self and gives us strength to step outside the self and feel the spiritual rumbles of the earth beneath our feet and rejoice.

I guess what I am saying is the world can be rough but it is up to us as individuals to mark our own territory. Accept the challenge and grow. So claim your canvas. Own the tools presented to you. Own your picture for each one of us has within us that gift of the artist, the painter. I believe that even if our palate, our tools, even if our canvas is not quite right we can choose though choice may not be easy we have within us the power of choice. Our palate may be loaded with the colours of darkness but we do not have to flood our canvas with these colours. Take the brush in your hand and own the moment. It takes effort to cover the canvas in darkness and even if the darkness floods in one single speck of light can help alter the perception of this darkness. Be the artist not the canvas. Own the self that is you and be proud.

Mind Recovery College help those of us who may never have actually realised that we have choices and are cautious to take the brush and place the paint upon their canvas and it also helps us realise that we can change the design. It may be hard. It may take work but it is worth it.

So stand tall be proud of who you are and who you have the potential to be.

*-Jenny
Mind South Australia*

THE MIND RECOVERY COLLEGE, MIND AUSTRALIA

Hi I'm Jenny. I'm 58yrs old and have spent the last 35yrs on the wrong side of the psychiatrists couch and have definitely kept many a chemist in business with my endless medication list.

I've heard voices and experienced other forms of sensory variations for almost as long as I can remember – they were there when I started school. They were part of my reality. I was awkward, shy and had trouble with language therefore I isolated. Why challenge what was for me normal.

I completed my registered nurses training moved to Melbourne and worked in a paediatric psychiatric unit. No one knew the chaos I experienced – until I rolled my car – woke up in emergency talking to my demons

My world was full of experiences others did not share.

I was 22

I was diagnosed with schizophrenia, anxiety and psychotic depression

In 3 days my world was stripped from me – I was diagnosed; detained medicated and told I would never be able to work again.

I believed them.

I've juggled and struggled with symptoms, with both community and personal stigma as I constantly questioned where my reality boundaries sat.

I have still done many things and now facilitate Sound Minds at Sky Light but last year I heard about the Mind Recovery College run by Mind Australia. I looked into it. It felt good. A place to learn, to share. A place to fit in.

The courses offered are wide and varied focussing on the many hiccups of life and the how these can influence and be influenced by our mental health and the mental health of the community.

Courses on anxiety, recovery, mood and food even looking at the Christmas stress gremlins.

A place to fit. A place to belong. To share and care about others but also about yourself.

The courses are short

There are no tests, no exams. The focus is on the learning experience. A life experience.

For me the Recovery College has helped me think of where I can go instead of looking with remorse at where I may have been – to think of the things I have and how to build on them therefore if you have any drive at all to move from where you are then I seriously recommend you look into the college.

Each day starts as a blank page and you have the power of the scribe so write your own story and rejoice.

*-Jenny
Mind South Australia*

MY RECOVERY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

The first course I attended with clients was Managing Stress. This was an invaluable course as just as the course completed the power went out. This was the day of the SA blackout and with two clients on board I needed to transport them home from Mile End to Paradise stopping on the way at a supermarket that thankfully had a generator so the clients could purchase something that did not require cooking for dinner. To keep the clients calm with one of the clients experiencing quite severe anxiety, I was able to remind them of how to manage their stress with tips learnt at the course.

I attended with a client the Food and Mood course. The client only attended the first session and although they did not continue with the course feeling that they struggled to remain focused due to short concentration ability, the feedback from the client was that the course was beneficial. I attended the second week and was able to use what I learnt to assist my grandson with his fussy eating whilst on holiday with him eating eight new foods in one day.

I supported the carer of one of my clients to attend the Carers Count course. This carer enjoyed the course and met with people of the same age and has gone on to remain friends with these people and is attending the Carers Coffee and Chat group that is run by Mind Australia and is now taking respite when she feels she needs to which is something she has not done in the past.

I have supported clients with transport home after the course and have always received positive feedback on the course they have been attending with the clients advising that they find the courses well run and have learnt new skills to use in their recovery journey.

Well done Recovery College staff! Keep up the great work!

Kind regards

-Linda

Happy Birthday for The Recovery College and the great work you do.

I have a client who has attended many courses at the College, after speaking with him about his experiences, he is happy for me to relay to you, his thoughts about the College.

He has had mental health issues for most of his life, he has been hospitalised many times, consequently missing out on many stages and events in life which most would take for granted. He lives alone, he has some contact with his family, but otherwise he has been quite isolated from the community.

However, he is a very smart, creative artistic person and as had no outlets for his talents, he was encouraged and supported to try a course at the College – which was 'Understanding the NDIS' as it was about a relevant and current issue, that all are clients are facing.

He really enjoyed the course and now has a better understanding of the new proposed system. Since then, he has enrolled in most of the courses available, as he likes to learn new information, gain the

tools to understand and help him more, have social contact with his peers and be part of a community.

Isaac enjoys the College because it is not like a 'school', the staff are friendly and supportive, and he is treated as a valued member of the group. The other attendees are also easy to get along with and they can have a laugh, and he is treated as an adult in a non-judgemental environment. He is also learning things about how to live well with a mental health issues and to fill in the learning gaps around social niceties and participation, which many people missed out on due, to hospitalisations and isolation. There is no other program or 'school' considering/offering or delivering education in these areas and he is glad that he able to be part of the Recovery College.

-Anonymous

"When my daughter started talking extensively the other day about the Greek philosophers, the Renaissance, the Mona Lisa, geometry and poetry, I was stunned. This was part of the Self Care course, topic [Intellectual self-care]. Along with other supports that are working for her, I saw her invigorated and mentally stimulated in a way I have not seen for a long time. I was thrilled, image how she feels."

- Lorraine (student family member and carer)

The "Peer work – what's it all about" course offered by the Mind Recovery College was an excellent introduction to all things Peer. The facilitators were fun and engaging and presented relevant and informative content. It gave a great explanation of what peer work looks like, the values which underpin that work and most importantly it explored what it means to be a Peer. I thoroughly enjoyed the course and will be definitely recommending it for people interested in the Peer space.

One of the most encouraging moments I witnessed at the conclusion of the course was when a participant stated they 'didn't think they were ready to be a peer worker' but it was 'definitely something to work towards'. This moment of recognition and insight truly illustrated the value of the course as a whole.

-Taegan (Lived Experience Workforce, SA Health)

"... He attended the Managing Stress course today. He really enjoyed it and actually said to me he was really proud of himself for attending. He's talking about attending another of the courses as well.

Thanks so much for all your support, it's a small step but such a wonderfully positive outcome."

- Libby (student's Mother)

What the Mind Recovery College™ means to me

After five years reflecting on what my involvement in the Mind Recovery College has meant to me in my life many things spring to mind.

I feel privileged to have met and worked with so many people engaging in authentic conversations rich with ideas, understanding, meaning and humanity. In a world where many things seem difficult and confusing, the simplicity and healing power of coming together to explore, share and learn is very, very heartening for me. As a Mind Recovery College Team we often reflect on the quality of our work conversations too. We all feel the sense of hope that our work is contributing to.

One dream I had in getting involved with the Mind Recovery College was to help create a more equal and inclusive way of working within the Mental Health system. The Mind Recovery College™ has given us a chance to show that diminishing hierarchy and power differences makes sense and works in practice. We have had the chance to shape an education based mental health service in a consumer and carer centred way. Coproduction has given us new knowledge, understanding and ideas that have shaped our courses and even how our campuses look. Students see this and say they are real and different to what they get elsewhere. That makes me very happy indeed.

The mental health system is changing. We are seeing the increasing interest in employing peers in mental health services. Other organisations are looking at how we work and interested in what they can learn from us to develop further their recovery oriented practice. The Recovery College movement is spreading worldwide and is increasingly being seen as a promising opportunity for helping people improve their mental health. That makes me happy too.

There is much more I could say but in summary I am a much better person for having worked as part of the Mind Recovery College™ I have been touched by many wonderful and inspiring stories of recovery by our students. And it has been the most wonderful, interesting, exciting, wild ride of my career so far. I feel grateful to everyone who has contributed to reaching our 5th birthday and hope the future for the college will be bright.

-Dianne Hardy

Mind Recovery College™ Director

I have loved my time at Mind and the College have seen how it has touched and changed the lives of hundreds of students.

I have learnt so much from all of the students, who amaze me every day with their stories of strength, courage and bravery.

Recently a student from Bendigo told me that at the Mind Recovery College you can “Explore yourself, better yourself and BE YOURSELF” and it made me think, what is better than that?!

What an honour to be surrounded by people learning, growing and making changes to live a better life. I am grateful for my time at the College surrounded by such a fantastic team and feel I am a better and richer person for being part of it.

A big HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the Mind Recovery College!

Here's to another 5 years of learnings and coproduction,

Amy Scott

Mind Recovery College™ Operations Manager

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-Anonymous

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I learn, I think, I am challenged, I am supported to try other options. It can teach us how to honour our feelings. It humbles me, it can give me routine, it can make my week better, I make friends.

-Anonymous

A tool I use to self-care to ground myself. It assists me to honour my sensitivities. To honour that sometimes I feel too much and that this is OK.

-Anonymous

Stimulating, I can't help but be in the moment, at the end of a session I usually feel freer.

-Anonymous

Happy Birthday Recovery College

It was nearly three years ago that I heard about the Mind Recovery College, I was so excited, I knew I had to work there, and I made it my mission to get involved. I was lucky, my affinity with the college model, that is, education, lived experience and mental health helped me get a gig. In my time here I've worked with the most amazing people, learned so much and been inspired, amused, changed in ways I never thought possible in paid work. It's been the job I have loved most in my life, shared values, compassion and kindness, acceptance and fun. We also like challenges, and as a team have not been afraid to co-create subjects that matter, suicide, hearing voices, grief and loss, anxiety, alongside food and mood, let's get moving, and choose to be happy, to name but a few. But, what has made it the most special of places is the magic created in courses with the students, it's like alchemy everything turns to gold and people are transformed, equipped with new skills, alongside a feeling of acceptance in who they are, and in who they can be.

I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to be part of the college and will continue to work hard to create a place for people to belong, to grow, to learn and feel valued and respected. As a student said *"The college creates a safe space to learn and knowledge is power, it gives you an increased sense of choice and control over your life, and opens your eyes to new possibilities"*. Bravo 😊

-Emma
Learning and Development Consultant

My time as a learning and development consultant at the Mind Recovery College has been such a very enlightening experience as I became part of students expressing their vulnerabilities and becoming assets to each other rather than being caught up in a mind full of uncertainty. For people who have experienced deep emotional distress and mental challenges this is a monumental step and one that starts personal transformation.

The college gave students a safe understanding environment where hope reached a point that students challenged themselves and learnt ways to make life choices that opened up new horizons rather than closed them down.

As one of the college facilitators that still today lives with mental challenges, I experienced first-hand how this role modelling inspired students also living with these challenges to give recovery another go and investigate what might be other positive ways of looking at themselves, their amazing resilience and their world.

Working at the college and seeing the growth of so many of the students I was often reminded of the following quote -

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift” Mary Oliver

-Sue
Learning and Development Consultant