

I AM A POWERFUL BEING
 CHANGE MEANS EXPANSION
 I AM LOVED
 IF IT'S NOT OVER THEN IT'S NOT THE END, IF IT'S NOT THE END IT'S NOT OVER
 HAVE THE COURAGE
 GRATITUDE
 I AM ENOUGH
 FIND THE STRENGTH
 I HAVE THE ABILITY TO CONTROL MY THOUGHTS
 UNDERSTANDING
 I AM NOT GOVERNED BY LIMITATION
 I HAVE GREATNESS INSIDE ME
 MY EXPERIENCES HAVE SHAPED WHO I AM AND I AM STRONGER BECAUSE OF IT
 MIND OVER MATTER



I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH

I CAN'T EXPRESS MYSELF

I FEEL AS ONE

NO ONE LIKES ME

I REALY STRUGGLE

LIMITATION

WILL NEVER ACHIEVE ANYTHING

BROKEN

WILL NEVER ACHIEVE ANYTHING

WILL NEVER ACHIEVE ANYTHING

Where is your mind?

ISSUE 1

@araliastudios

Introduction

Mental Health is something we have got better at talking about, yet it remains a taboo in many communities and major health concern for our society. Importantly it's an area where we are still figuring out how best to support ourselves and each other. Through creative workshops and interviews, this zine doesn't give answers but rather explores what mental health is, what it means to people and what is working for them. We hope in some way it allows you to do the same.

The zine also offers a small glimpse at some of the charities and groups in Rotherham that are working to support people every day. If you are suffering with your mental health we hope that this will make you feel less alone and offer you a slice of hope that there is a community out there waiting to help and listen.

If you are affected by anything you read in this zine or would like to know where you can go for some help, there is a list of handy resources at the back of the publication.

FRONT COVER DESIGN:

ARALIA STUDIOS

@Aralia Studios - Facebook
www.araliastudios.co.uk

Name of Piece: **NAVIGATING
THOUGHTS THROUGH OPEN
WATERS**





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I like when
it calms
me
down.

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 Voluntary
Action
Rotherham

This zine was created by Voluntary Action Rotherham. We exist to support, develop and promote the voluntary and community sector in the Rotherham borough.



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*"Your mind is the garden,
Your thoughts are the seeds,
The harvest can either be the flowers or weeds."
- William Wordsworth*

Illustrated by Anthony Lacey

"It was an escape"

In the last centenary our society has dramatically changed. Through globalisation and technology our identity, our work and the way we communicate has shifted unrecognisably. One thing that has remained close to many hearts is a love of *The Beautiful Game*. Football, the passion and the pride it inspires in our community can not be underestimated. It is this passion that brings together the Mature Millers who meet every Monday morning in Rotherham.

We chat to Derek France, Chairman of the group about how he got involved with the Mature Millers and how it has helped tackle two big culprits of poor Mental Health; isolation and loneliness.

Can you give us a little bit of background yourself about the Mature Millers (MM)?

Rotherham United Community Sports Trust set it up to get people talking and to get people out of the house - and they use football to get people to go in. I've lived in Rotherham all my life, and I've been going to the Mature Millers for eight years now. There's about 20 of us who go.

How did you come across the MM?

My wife, Christine, died 10 years ago. She said to me once: "You've got no friends." I said, "I don't need friends, I've got you." With work, I'd done so much on my own, so whatever I was doing, it was always a pleasure to take her with me.

When she died, I realised what she was going on about. I hadn't got a friend. I had to go back to basics and work my way forward.





And that's where the MM come in?

Yes, I started going to the Millers Away Games and someone mentioned the group the Mature Millers to me. I'd never heard of them before. That was eight years ago. I went up the first Monday after I heard about them, got involved and really enjoyed it.

It was an escape. I palled up with someone who also went to the group and met some others. Afterward we bumped into each other in town and had a coffee, exchanged numbers and now we meet up for meals. We've also been on holiday together and I've never laughed as much in my life.

A lot has changed over the last few decades. Lots of community spaces such as Working Men's Clubs are gone, or they're much less prominent than they used to be. Is it right to say this group helps fill in that gap, and in turn helps tackle loneliness and isolation?

Yes, it plays a part. A rainy week can drive you crackers. There's 12 to 14 hours in a day and you're sat on your own, and that's hard. You're in the house all day, telly's on, radio's on, but how much do we actually talk to each other? That's why we're trying to get more people to come to the group. We do other things besides football, we have meals every so often, and we had a trip to York recently.

Football is a great connector, particularly among men. Why do you think that is?

I'm not sure why, but yeah, it's a bonding experience. You have an identity with your team. I was quite late starting actually. I used to take my son on a Saturday when he was young, about seven. He got the hook then. I wanted to get stuck in with my son, get involved with him.

So football was a way to bond with your son?

Yes, it was. I was at work a lot so it was something to share together. It's the buzz.

What helps your mental health?

Contact with people. You walk around town hoping to see someone you know.

It sounds like you have a good chance of doing that in Rotherham - you know everyone!

Yeah, I saw someone this morning, had 5-minute natter.

And for you, that's the best thing for Mental Health?

Yes. Saw a couple yesterday and we were nattering on. Reminiscing.

And what advice do you have for others who may be in similar positions?

Get out there. Those first two years on your own are not easy, not easy at all. It's like sending you to Timbuctoo and saying start again.

And it sounds like you've done a good job of getting out there!

Yes, I try to always have a smile. I'm the chair of the group now. These groups are a damn good idea. There's more to life!



What does the inside of your brain look like?

On a bright afternoon on the cusp of Christmas 2022, we visited **Rush House**, a charitable organisation based in Rotherham that provides a range of accommodation and support services to young people aged 16-25. It was all hands to the pens and glue as a group of us explored the inside of our minds through drawing and collage. As you will see; we are all living with a lot going on in our heads! What shines through is also that we are never feeling one thing at one time, rather a cocktail of emotions all at once.







Looking for nature

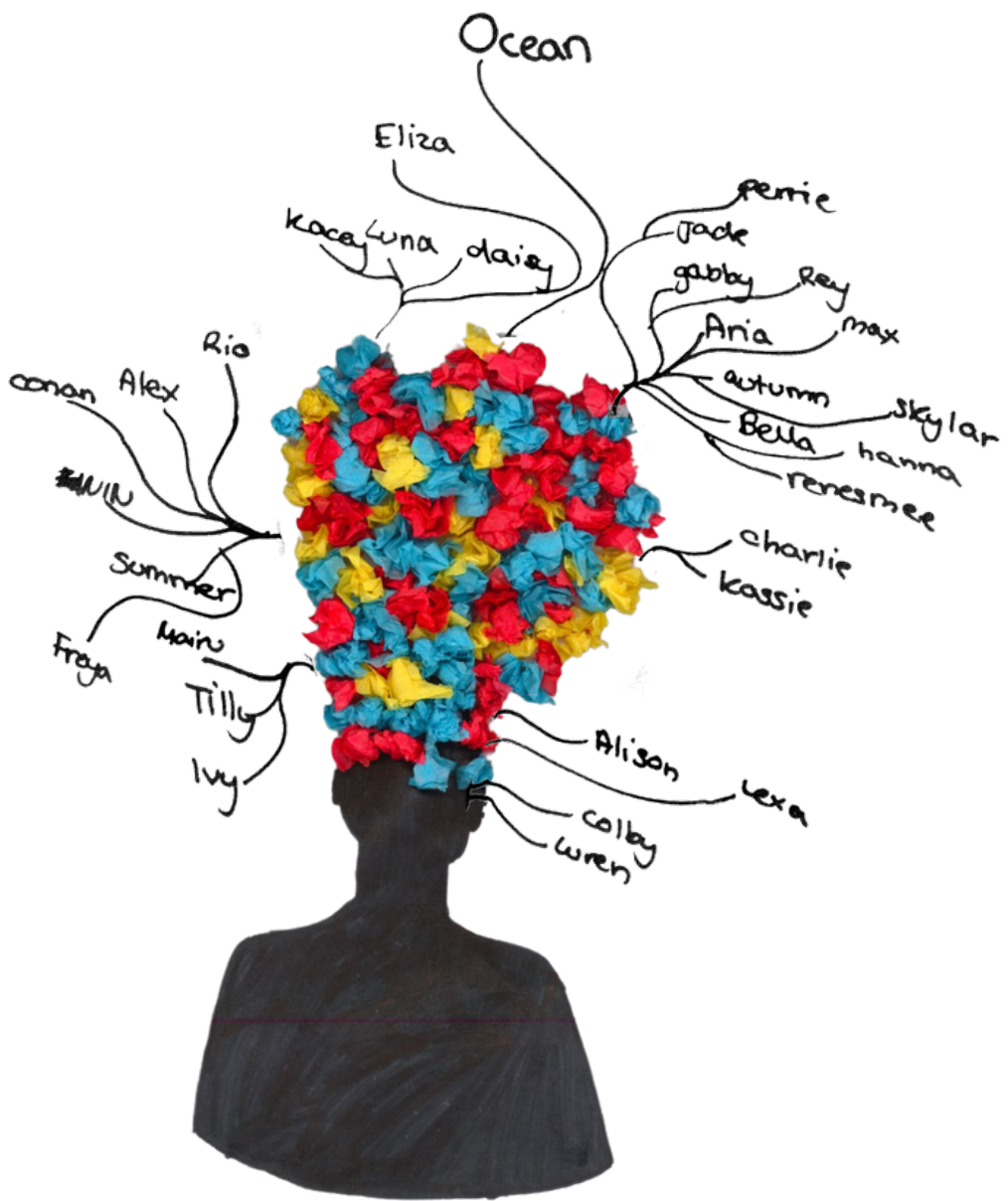
TEAS ▼

Ar

Yorkshire

23

Love



My

Brain

always putting others first instead of looking after myself

Living out of mind and body

Feeling conflicted

thinking due to past thoughts

Stressed out

constant mind fog

feeling worthless and a failure

not feeling complete

worrying about bills

second guessing myself



"I'm an open book"

A small revolution has been happening in S62 and it comes in the form of a group of people who have come together to give something back to their local area. S62 Community Together are a collection of peer support groups, covering mental health, community engagement and self-development of Rotherham folk. Their weekly sessions include a Men's Mental Health Group that meet every Monday evening in Rawmarsh. We chatted to Anthony, one of the members of the group, about how it all started, what he's learnt and his own lived experience.

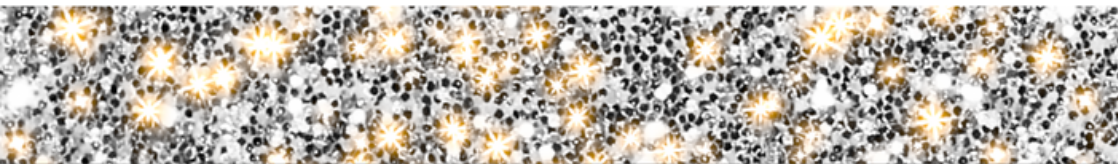
"I'm an open book" is how Anthony describes himself and let's all be very thankful for that. Mental Health has been a taboo in our society for generations, yet in the last few years due in a big part to the courage of individuals, like Anthony, speaking up about their experiences, that has begun to change.

Groups, such as the one Anthony helps facilitate have also been pivotal in that shift, especially when it comes to Men's Mental Health where there has been need for action. The ONS reports that just over three out of four suicides are by men, and suicide is the biggest cause of death for men under 35. Some of this comes down to what Anthony describes as "old fashioned stigma (...) you know a man can't cry because he's seen as weak if he cries." Anthony, like many others with lived experience of Mental Health, has seen first-hand how sharing these experiences can actively help other people, and that is a crucial part of how the group works.

He is reluctant to label himself or Luke, who also facilitates the sessions, as 'leaders': "I like to say the group runs itself (...) It's a fellowship 100%. That's how we see it." Since its foundation the community created has blossomed with regular goers setting up a WhatsApp group and meeting up outside of the weekly get together: "We've even got it where some service users are going out with other service users for a meal, or catching up for a coffee" he tells me.

The sessions are very informal. Anyone can go along, and nobody is forced to speak they can just sit in and listen. The group has helped 40-50 men in total, with a solid 10 that come along week in, week out. It's a diverse crowd, with new faces turning up regularly. They all come from very different backgrounds and have different experiences and understanding of mental health, as Anthony explains: "We've an ex-bouncer that now suffers with anxiety that never actually believed in anxiety or depression, but now he has bought two books on it and can relate to his daughter. He is feeling better since coming to the group."

Anthony has CPTD (Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) after what he explains was "17 years of trauma." After the separation of his parents at aged 13 he was forced to grow up quick, looking after his baby sister whilst his mother struggled with alcoholism. This traumatic period of his life, alongside devastating revelations about his abusive Grandfather, ended with him homeless when he was just 18 years old: "I sofa surfed for a bit and then I spent nine months on the streets of Sheffield. I saw a gentleman pass away at the side of me one evening in the cold. He wasn't a friend, but it was safety in numbers after I had had kicking's by people on nights out."



Anthony has spent time working through these experiences with professional help, which in turn has enabled him to pass on a lot of knowledge to others in the group about trauma and the affect it can have on you. This understanding he believes is key to the healing process: "I think that studying and learning about yourself is one of the biggest aides. What are your triggers? By learning these things you've got more of an understanding. You know what to push if you know what I mean."

Although he has spent a lot of time understanding this traumatic part of his background, he says that the anxiety he still lives with deeply affects him: "The day to day of my life is way more difficult than thinking back to trauma (...) I still struggle on a day-to-day basis I must admit". The physical effect of anxiety is something that is not often discussed. Anthony sheds light on just some of his symptoms- the tension and muscular pain he experiences makes him "feel like a 50-year-old man at 30" - a tight chest, not breathing properly and headaches are other thorny side effects. Anxiety also impacts memory, the daily mental battle can take up so much headspace you simply can't store any more information, something which has impacted him in his work.

He finds being open and honest about how he feels is a great help, and this works on an everyday scale - telling his partner that he has woken up in a bad mood - to sharing his story more openly. As well as his conversations within the group, he has recently done a presentation in front of the NHS and, alongside this interview, explains this is a big step to boosting his self-esteem. Fundamentally he believes a lot of what helps him comes down to acceptance, he summarises: "If you are having negative thoughts you know like 'that's irritating me', you should never really turn around and stay 'stop thinking like that' because the more that you think negative like that, the worse it gets. You should just accept what mood you are in and continue with whatever you are doing."

He has high hopes for the future and says he is "overly positive about the group and how we are as a community". Being overly positive should never be considered impossible, but in the current climate it is refreshing to hear. He goes on: "Personally I would like groups like ours in every community. We've got community centres that are just being used as a bingo hall once a week or what not (...) that would be my idea of heaven for people to be able to have a space near them to just talk."





THE
KOS
ARTS



Anthony Lacey @kaostheoryest2003

Exploring our wellbeing

YAWR Services aim to support the communities of Rotherham and the surrounding areas of South Yorkshire. They have a regular craft session and we popped along to talk to them about What Makes them Feel Good.

Armed with old books and magazines we talked about their life and how they interact with others. The ladies have recently been involved in a gardening group, so it was lovely to see how they chose resources which reflected how the outdoors improves their mental health. Some of the ladies don't speak English as their first language, but were still able to engage positively with the support of bi-lingual members in the group.



...light cones like the structure, have an internal area
process complex images. The nocturnal eye shine of a
light-reflecting membrane, the tapetum lucidum, which

...grass, the insect
is in dappled forest shade
in dry savanna. In some

...to be a distinct speci
he spots shimmer through it
as said to be most

...enough to attack, cats stalk their prey. The feline stalk - head and body held low,
intermittent fast approaches when the prey is not looking, the final sway and
explosive leap - is almost universal. *Pseudaelurus* probably stalked this way 20

...viii nerves. Combined with very
he correct path of lightning speed
ecessitates bulging jaw muscles, w

his paperbark maple *Acer griseum* is just one of hundreds of specimen trees that Tim has grown.

Dense, shrubby cover complements the canopy way above, to offer a multitude of nesting and feeding opportunities.

The overall effect is of interlinking woodland glades with rich plant ground layer support.



Chaffinch
Bright, cheery, delivered with a descending trill, accelerating to a flourish – like a church bell peal (or a bowler's action, running to the crease, if cricket imagery helps!) Dee dee dee, doo doo doo, diddy doo...



As I twinkle [redacted] quietly [redacted]. The [redacted] the soaring canopy [redacted]. The main birds [redacted] near the top of [redacted] branches and [redacted] [redacted]. "Nature has a wonderful way of blending things!" [redacted] the tree [redacted]



Pray. mat



Reading



Quran
Relax

Soothing



Reading Spiritual
words
~~Counter~~
Counter

Peace
happy
Believe
Calm
Strong
Mind

I feel good when I go out for

Walk

See

Flowers
trees

People

Shops



“The more you try and make things

power



better for nature, the more nature

The weather was vile on the horizon,

from prevailing winds

deep i

leapt the gaps.

will give you... and that only

”



species.

whispers



Emperor's new clothes

The stunning Saturniids [redacted] moths, [redacted] low, Bright
arresting, owl-like eyes [redacted] colourful [redacted] flashes his
eyes [redacted] burnt orange
[redacted] moonlight-toned
[redacted] at night.

makes it brighter.

جمع کے دن مجھے بہت سارے کام خوشی سے کرنے پڑتے ہیں



جمع کے دن

on Friday

مجھے بہت خوش

I feel happy

سے ہر کام کرنے

I do everything

on Friday

تعمیر

✍





A NEW HOPE

give

support,

FREEDOM

take root and support

TOGETHER

"Putting it on the map"

Over the past 12 months menopause has had a moment, with campaigns such as "Menopause Mandate", and several prolific figures like Davina McCall and Kathy Burke opening-up about their own troubling experiences. For this health topic that has been kicked into the shadows for generations, finally women are, as Jane, Link Worker and founder of Rotherham based local menopause support group says, "putting it on the map." We chatted to Jane about the group, the symptoms of menopause, particularly around mental health, and what the future looks like for support around the topic.



Jane's role as a Social Prescribing Link Worker is to listen to people who are struggling with their health and put them touch with the people and activities that might help them feel better. It was through this role that she and others noticed that there was "demand and interest" for a support network for women with the menopause. A group was set up in September 2022, and it's been popular to say the least. 50 or so women in Rotherham are currently involved, with an increasing number of women getting in touch to find out more; in 2023 they are looking into doing groups both online and in person to reach everyone across the Borough.

The menopause, which is defined by the NHS as a time when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels, has been a taboo topic for generations, something we delve into further in this interview, but to lay a bit of ground-work, we ask Jane about just some of its symptoms: "For the women I have spoken to... it seems to come on really quickly it's not like a gradual process. They just suddenly become tearful, anxious, things that they used to be able to cope with in everyday life become a big issue, sleep is a massive one as well. Anxiety, depression, issues in relationships and brain fog, doing the daftest things. It's almost like having a form of dementia."

The seriousness of the symptoms cannot and should not be overlooked. Jane tells us that she has known women die by suicide because of the impact of menopause has had on their lives, which reflects reporting on the subject.

With more of us working longer and into older age, one area where a lot of the women she has spoken to have frustrations is with the lack of support at work: "Just because you go to work, that doesn't mean that the symptoms of the menopause are left behind, they still go with you. You have that brain fog, you feel you can't work, your anxiety levels have gone up, you're stressed. All of this has such a detrimental and psychological impact in the workplace." Even though official policies are still scarce, thankfully national efforts are underway to open this discussion; it's another area Jane and colleagues will be looking at in the future.



We delve into other key themes that have come up during the support sessions. One of them is around the "perimenopause" - this is the stage where women are not in full menopause but thinking they might be starting to go through it. Jane has noticed that a lot of the women attending the group are in this category- in their early to mid-40s - and at the very beginnings of the process, but not getting the help they need: "Women are telling us they are not being listened to by the GPs and are just being sent off with anti-depressants and told to come back in 5 years' time. So what we are looking at now in 2023 are answers to questions like, how do you approach a GP?" Jane will be helping arm the women with the right questions to ask and offer them alternative routes to support.

The theme of not being listened to is reflected in wider discussions around Women's Health. A recent and first ever published Women's Health Strategy in this country said 84% of respondents said that there had been instances in which they had not been listened to by healthcare professionals. The same report states: *And while women make up 51% of the population, historically the health and care system has been designed by men for men.*

Much of this context offers reasons why the menopause has always been such a taboo. Historically in the 15th and 16th centuries it is believed women with menopausal symptoms were burnt at the stake; during the Victorian era the only option for a lot of women was to be locked in an asylum.

Although things have vastly improved for women, today education around the menopause is not widespread and gaining access to treatment difficult. Alongside reported national shortages of HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy - a favoured treatment method for the condition), there are still many hoops to jump through to receive it. You have to get a GP appointment, blood tests done and blood pressure checked to even get a prescription. This might seem normal practice. But as Jane points out, compare it to the ease of access of Sildenafil (Viagra) a treatment offered to men once their "testosterone starts dropping but their libido is still there" which you can now receive straight from the pharmacy without a prescription from the GP. Jane hopes a similar process will be set up for women to access HRT, with a simple blood test that you can do at the pharmacy like you do with diabetes, which can read your hormone levels.


Ultimately Jane is optimistic, she has seen massive swing over the last 6 months and believes that policies such as the Women's Health Strategy will help raise greater awareness of the menopause. Yet there is still a way to go. As she neatly summarises "women know their own bodies" and connecting with other people who are experiencing similar problems to you, especially where mental health is concerned, can be very rewarding and help you feel less alone.







Rhianna Josephine Wilkinson



Help & Support

Rotherhive - a range of verified practical mental health and wellbeing information, support and advice for adults in Rotherham - rotherhive.co.uk

Rotherham Gismo - an online directory of voluntary and community groups in Rotherham - rotherhamgismo.co.uk

Samaritans - Every seven seconds, they respond to a call for help. No judgement. No pressure. They are there for anyone who needs someone - **116 123**

Mental Health Innovations - Free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging mental health support service. Text "**SHOUT**" to **85258** for free from all major UK mobile networks. You'll then be connected to a volunteer for an anonymous conversation by text message.

Rotherham & Barnsley Mind - an independent local provider of high quality mental health services in Rotherham, Barnsley and its surrounding areas - rbmind.co.uk

Rethink Rotherham - Rotherham Support Group offers people with mental illness the chance to come together in a relaxed and welcoming space. Their friendly group meets every week to socialise, share experiences and offer support and encouragement to each other - **07879 400847 / rethink.org**

Andy's Man Club - a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across the United Kingdom and online - andysmanclub.co.uk

Rotherham Safe Space - offer "Hope in a Crisis", a safe space and someone to talk to. They are based on Carnson House on Moorgate Road in Rotherham, and are open Friday, Saturday and Sunday 6pm-midnight - **0808 175 3991 / touchstonesupport.org.uk**

Thank you to everyone featured in the zine:

S62 Community Together Rotherham - a collection of peer support groups based in the S62 area of Rotherham, covering mental health, community engagement and self development of Rotherham folk - s62ctr.co.uk

Rush House - a charitable organisation based in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, that provides a range of accommodation and support services including advice, independent living skills and training to young people aged 16-25 - rushhouse.co.uk

Mature Millers - A time to reminiscence and come together with fellow Miller fans, on Mondays 10am - 12 noon - rucst.co.uk

YAWR - To enable people from ethnic minority backgrounds to control their own lives and live independently through the provision of health and social care facilities, advocacy and information support services - yawrservices.org

Menopause Support Group - This group is open to all women in Rotherham and offers a supportive space to discuss issues and learn from each other. Sessions running throughout 2023 - www.varotherham.org.uk

We are bringing together an Alliance of non-profits in Rotherham who are supporting people in the community with their mental health. If you want to find out more about the Alliance or this zine - we'd love to hear from you!

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