



Adrian's Story

When I attended the All in the Mind Festival in March 2018, all I knew was that it is an annual event held by Fluid Motion Theatre Company in Basingstoke, exploring mental health and the challenges it presents to society. I was recommended to volunteer at the information desk, as I had recently arrived in the area after heart surgery, and was looking for something to fulfil me, as I could not take up full-time employment. I'm glad I did, because I was pleasantly surprised to find such a variety of performances raising awareness about mental health challenges, and promoting the thinking that "it's OK to not be OK".

Arriving early to orient myself and catch some performances, I was impressed with how professionally everything was organised and how frank and willing the performers were to talk openly about their problems. Having personally battled with anxiety, depression and anger issues following my stroke in 1992, it was only twenty years later that I accepted I had a mental health issue. Growing up in an era when mental health wasn't discussed in families, let alone with outsiders or doctors, it was refreshing to hear the honesty of the performers, speaking so publicly.

As a man who was told to sort myself out or shape up instead of deal with my problems, I am pleased to see attitudes towards mental health changing for the better. Thanks to the efforts of groups like Fluid Motion, mental health is no longer a taboo subject, wrapped in stigma. The knowledge that anyone can be affected – from children taking exams and pre- or post-natal parents to front line service personnel or celebrities – means that it can now be discussed openly.

Going to the All in the Mind Festival was one of the best things I could have done. Chatting with like-minded people, facing a variety of challenges, in glorious sunshine (weather NOT guaranteed), listening to poetry and music, or watching dance routines and theatre, inspired me with how society can extinguish the prejudice attached to mental health.

It helps to show what we can ALL do to help ourselves, and those in need. Best of all – it motivated me to take writing up again: a medium I find helps me to sort through the plethora of thoughts that crawl around my head: disturbing my sleep, affecting my ability to put things into perspective, causing me stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and anger.

So thank you All in the Mind and Fluid Motion. I will definitely be attending again this year and would highly recommend it to others. - Adrian Ballard, festival volunteer