

Doreen Matthews – Knighton Friday Group

“I love Fridays.” So say the members of Knighton Friday Group.

We meet as friends, share stories and experiences of our lives and talk of what our week has been like. The Group is so important to us. Life for most of us is not easy, events may have happened to us which cause anxiety and depression, but one of the big things in life is loneliness.

I met a friend who I have known for many years, and I was asked to have coffee. I was in a hurry, but I did stop and we talked about many things. The comment was “My world has got smaller; I seem to have lost confidence, so find it hard to live my life, and feel rather worthless.” This person has tried to find help but does not like groups and when seeking help it has not really worked. I could not find answers, but I did listen and give gentle understanding. As we parted the remark from this friend was “I feel so much better now that I have met you today, I always feel better when I meet you.”

The comment “My world has gotten smaller” has stayed with me. I thought my world had gotten smaller too since my husband died, I have lost so much confidence, and if I did not make the effort to go out and meet people I would end up a very lonely person.

Friday Group has been so important and good for me. I have been a member of Mid Powys Mind for 15 years and I have learnt so much from the activities. Doing a craft and being creative is so good for the brain, I feel more relaxed and my spirit’s uplifted, it takes me out of my usual domestic world.

Over the years I have seen members come and go; we have had our highs and lows, sometimes despairing as to whether we can go on. Something always happens; a new member comes along, a new friend and we feel encouraged. I do wish people would realise how special and important they are to the group, I always like to see who is coming in through the door.

When someone comes along for the first time we know how hard it is for them to walk into the room; first impressions count and we can

make or break at that first meeting, so we have to be careful how we deal with this.

When people ask us "How are you?" the usual answer is to say "I am fine, very well". The truth is in many cases they are not fine and sometimes want to talk, we must remember to give them the chance to talk but with our own busy lives we tend to just hurry along. A nice smile can do wonders; a cheerful considerate person can make a difference. A nasty remark can put people down for hours.

Earlier this year we were told there would have to be a cutback due to lack of funding. We took on the running of the group ourselves straight away, with involvement from Mid Powys Mind. We all put a little extra money in to give us a working fund, and the Rotary Club gave us a generous donation to keep us going. We used some of the money to buy season tickets to The Whimble Nursery Garden. The tickets allow a member to visit the garden whenever they want, a place of beauty which is a natural therapy to make us feel better. We are using the gardens for some of our meetings; our next visit will be reading poetry and taking in the scents and colours of this lovely garden. We will have tea and cake and perhaps buy a plant. Walking through the wild flower meadow on our last visit with friends made us feel we were in another world. We had a visit to Monkland Cheese, of course we all now know how to make cheese, but we haven't got a cow so we will leave it to the experts.

This year we have chalk painted wooden spoons, made pretty boxes, wolfed down homemade rhubarb and strawberry crumble and cream gateau and last week we made raffia mats which resembled Hobnob biscuits. Oh yes, we love our crafts. We really enjoyed the 'Havin' a laugh' workshop with the comedians, they found us very comical, we ladies taught them a lot about life!

We felt, as a group, that we would like to reach out to others and it was decided we would make little posies for the Queens 90th birthday. The result was breathtaking when we looked at our work arranged in baskets, which was then taken to Cottage View Residential Home. The shades and perfumes of roses and sweet williams just gave off a feeling of joy and happiness. We had collected so many flowers and

the happy “buzz” of busy bees being creative made me just stop and listen to our ladies. I thought of how happy everyone sounded, we were friends together, so contented in one another’s company. We all went up to Cottage View Residential Home and presented each resident with a dainty bouquet as we all sang Happy Birthday to the Queen. The feedback from the home let us know how glad they were to have us there and we hope to return again.

The group has become very strong and we are getting new members. Everyone is so enthusiastic, putting in an effort to make things work. We make our motto “We can achieve anything”. I think we can be proud of ourselves, and we are becoming noticed in Knighton.

We are now looking forward to an afternoon picnic at Aston on Clun on a member’s lawn. Then we will be dancing with Powys Dance, we just love that! Our imagination makes us swans, sugar plum fairies, salsa dancers, fashion models or whatever we want to be.

The great thing about our group is that we are friends who care about one another, friends who laugh and have fun.