

Creating A Mentally Fit Show

Does a sad lack of attendance at consecutive FIT Show seminars on the topic of mental health indicate a lack of industry interest? asks Kate Ashley-Norman.

At the 2019 FIT Show I stood on the stage of the seminar theatre and spoke about mental wellbeing to an audience of...four people, writes The Installer's Wellbeing columnist, Kate Ashley-Norman.

At the 2022 FIT Show I sat in the audience of a very similar looking seminar theatre and listened to Certass' Jon Vanstone talk about the excellent Light-house Club – a mental health service for the construction industry. I was one of four people.

Does this lack of attendance indicate a distinct lack of industry interest in mental health in fenestration?

Should we stop talking about mental health? Should we shrug our shoulders, pack our bags and turn our backs on trying to encourage greater awareness?

I understand that people visit the FIT Show to talk about everything but their emotions. Price rises, operational issues, generating leads, improving supply chains – these are the topics that keep your businesses ticking over day after day. Emotional wellbeing is very low down on the list of priorities.

Yet that Birmingham hall was brimming with emotion during the whole of the three days of this year's show. There was joy at being back together, fear for the future, trepidation and excitement for the future, sadness for friends lost along the way – this ebb and flow of emotions help to power this amazing industry and give it its own unique personality.

A caring industry

I have personally experienced that this industry cares deeply for others. Twenty odd years ago I helped Gary Morton establish GM Fundraising's first ever event. The compassion and support that was poured into helping terminally ill children has continued unabated over the last two decades.

That same love, time and money is also being poured into the charity set up by Glazerite's John Hewitt – We Mind & Kelly Matters. Social media and the pages of the trade press are full of the contributions of individuals demonstrating their commitment and compassion to a wide range of causes, forming an accurate picture of an industry that is passionate and committed to giving back.

It truly gladdens the heart – and one of the reasons why I love this industry.

As well as being a psychotherapist, I am also a communications expert. The consistency and regularity of the message is its strength. I apply this philosophy to everything I do in the mental health arena.

Mental health may not be a commercial priority for many as we head into an economic crisis. But awareness is everything if the industry is going to come through the next few years unscathed. There may be those close to you who will need help, even if their need is not obvious.



Carrying the flag

So no, I won't be going anywhere. I shall continue to write my articles about empowering your mindset, embracing your emotions and working to build emotional resources. I shall continue to bang the drums for embracing those very normal and human emotions that too easily get labelled as mental 'illness' when the reality is that they are a normal human reaction to adverse circumstances.

My KAN training programme is based on positive psychology and teaches people to grow and nurture a 'can do' attitude that will carry them through adversity – and protect them against excessive mental distress. **i**

Picture:

If you would like to join the metal health cause, contact Kate Ashley-Norman who partners with fenestration companies to strengthen employee wellbeing.

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