



Battling Anxiety One Game at a Time

A Stroke Survivor's Journey with Table Tennis

Themes: mental wellbeing, Bat & Chat

According to data collected by the Stroke Association, 100,000 people have a stroke each year with 1.3 million stroke survivors in the UK. Anxiety is a common issue after having a stroke, with around one in four people experiencing anxiety within five years after having a stroke.

Andree from Stilton in Cambridgeshire has been left with a legacy of anxiety and anxiety attacks since having a stroke in 2019, she has found that playing table tennis has significantly helped her recovery and improved her life.

Background

Andree became the sole carer for her husband after he was diagnosed with dementia in mid-2016, which led to them experiencing loneliness and isolation. In late 2019 Andree had a stroke, which has left her with a legacy of anxiety and anxiety attacks.

Andree's husband passed away in mid-May 2021, with the months prior to this being very challenging for Andree as she saw a significant deterioration in her mental health.

Despite living in Stilton for over 40 years Andree didn't know many people in the village, due to working full time and then caring for her husband and childminding her niece and nephew. Andree attended the village tea club in summer of 2021, where some of the members recommended the Bat & Chat group on Mondays at Stilton Table Tennis Club. After being uncertain at first Andree found the courage to go along and attended her first session on 31st January 2022.

Stilton Table Tennis Club have been running their Bat & Chat sessions for six years, which they run as a social session specifically for older adults or those who work unsociable hours and wouldn't be able to attend the club night on Tuesdays.

The sessions have an average of 24 participants attending each week, with the group also getting together for coffee mornings, social lunches and festive events.



The Impact

Since starting at the clubs Bat & Chat sessions, Andree has seen a big improvement in her mental wellbeing, as well as positive changes to her confidence levels and recovery from her stroke.

"It is obvious to me that the game is extremely good to improve thinking skills and that can only help my brain recover from my stroke. I'm learning new skills which makes my brain work better and faster, and my brain doesn't 'wander' as it did before – I feel I can now make important decisions instead of overthinking and end up not deciding on things. I am more focussed on what I am doing in that moment with a bat and ball in my hand".

"The Monday session has made a big difference to my life and is helping to restore a bit more self-confidence too, as I meet and play with others at a variety of skill levels. I am more at ease now when I am in a group after pushing myself to attend the table tennis sessions, and I feel good when I achieve a good score or play a good shot in a game".

Andree's progress is demonstrated through her winning 'Most Improved Bat & Chat Member' last season. In addition, she is travelling to Saint-Christol-lès-Alès in France in October 2024 to represent the club in a 'Table Tennis Twinning' event – something she never thought possible three years ago. 34 members of the club will be making the trip, with almost half of these being Bat & Chat players.



"I want to pass on my appreciation for all the encouragement and training I have been given by Steve Ambler and Richard Harding and also from others within the group".

"Andree experienced a life changing illness prior to joining our Bat & Chat group. It has been a joy to see her confidence and table tennis skills grow considerably".

*Steve Ambler
Stilton Table Tennis Club*

You can find out more about the Bat & Chat project [here](#) or find a place to play table tennis using our [Table Finder Tool](#).