

I was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2017 due to the onset of a tremor in my right hand/arm but, on speaking to the consultant it was clear that I'd had Parkinson's for some 10 years or so due to the many other symptoms I suffered.

I slowly went into deep depression with the realisation of what was facing me over the coming years. I had to be on sick leave from my job and basically didn't want to see or talk to others.

It was during this time that the Parkinson's Specialist Nurse directed me to Mind2Muscle. It was operating at a stadium in Salford nearby and although it was a huge deal for me to go, I decided to take the plunge and see what it was about.

I was assessed by Charlotte and joined in a group session with other Parkinson's affected people. I had always liked exercise and seeing others like me and worse than me doing boxing, circuit training and an exercise regimen with Charlotte I liked what I saw. The class was hard work but there was a group feeling of camaraderie, good banter and a trust of what Charlotte was telling the group and individuals who needed amendments to ensure inclusion.

I found myself looking forward to going to Mind2Muscle and started going to other classes near and far. My confidence grew quickly and if Charlotte was working with an individual, I would lead the class myself (at this time Charlotte was a one-man band).

Mind2Muscle became my second home, after a year my mental health had improved, I was physically fit and ready to return to normal life through the help and support Mind2Muscle had given me. I was able to return to work, my employer was great with me and telling them how Mind2Muscle helped they allowed me time to attend a couple of sessions per week. I continued to work on various roles as with my tremor I was unable to do my own job, from 2018 until lockdown.

March 2020 I was furloughed, soon after Mind2Muscle couldn't operate at the various venues. The Mind2Muscle group had a WhatsApp group so we kept contact but it wasn't the same. Once again, I felt myself go into a decline mentally, my Parkinson's appeared to be swallowing me up, tremors had now started in my left side, cognitively I was struggling with simple things, reading, taking in what was being said to me properly, getting confused with short term memory.

Halleluiah, I got a message from Charlotte, Mind2Muscle was allowed to open as it came under mental health services. It was to be run from its own new site in Blackburn 32miles from where I live. I was desperate to get back to group, I had a car and so it didn't matter that it would take 40 mins there, and back again.

On assessment Charlotte told me she would get me back mentally to where I had been and although the Parkinson's had deteriorated slightly, I was still able to do the specific exercise regimen she put in place.

I was dealt a blow when at the end of lockdown in October 2021 I was finished from work due to capability issues. This however didn't phase me too much I was going to Mind2Muscle three times a week and getting back to how I was before lockdown. The real blow came when out of the blue my driving license was revoked also in October, due to medical information that I had cognitive issues. Charlotte assured me she would work on my cognitive skills during exercise if I could get there. The journey would be a bus, a train, and a bus at the Blackburn end to get to Mind2Muscle which I couldn't do. A family member volunteered to take me as they knew how attending Mind2Muscle was so good for me.

During our exercises Charlotte would have us doing simple maths, spelling, reciting words, etc everything possible to get comprehension, memory and application working better in the brain. I have had cognitive tests every six months for the past few years. The algorithm refers to two assessment scales: the **Parkinson's Disease - Cognitive Functional Rating Scale (PD-CFRS)** and the **Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA)** my scores normally range around 20-23 but recently my test result was 27.

I can't thank Charlotte and the Mind2Muscle team (oh yes, no longer a one-man band) and my Parkinson's colleagues enough. My home life, social life, mental and physical health is improving constantly. I will continue to attend Mind2Muscle for as long as I'm able, which I can see is several years yet.