

Beer Mat Chat - Love, Loss & Lager

Mark A Hazelwood, Chief Executive and Rebecca M Patterson, Policy and Communications Manager, Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care

Background

Storytelling/remembrance can reduce the isolation of recently (and less recently) bereaved people, and strengthen community resilience¹. Traditional rituals and approaches which supported storytelling/remembrance are declining in Scotland. Pubs are hubs of social interaction and storytelling, especially for men. There is some evidence that pubs are places where men may choose to talk about topics which are not normally explicitly discussed, such as emotions².

Aim

To explore the acceptability of beer mats in pubs as a prompt to storytelling and remembrance of people who have died, and to promote *To Absent Friends*, a people's festival of storytelling and remembrance.

Method

5 mats were designed – each had a carefully selected quotation or piece of trivia relating to loss or remembrance, plus a web link to www.toabsentfriends.org.uk. 20,000 mats were made available to order. Feedback regarding acceptability was elicited through conversation with bar tenders and direct observation of the mats in situ. A press release was issued.

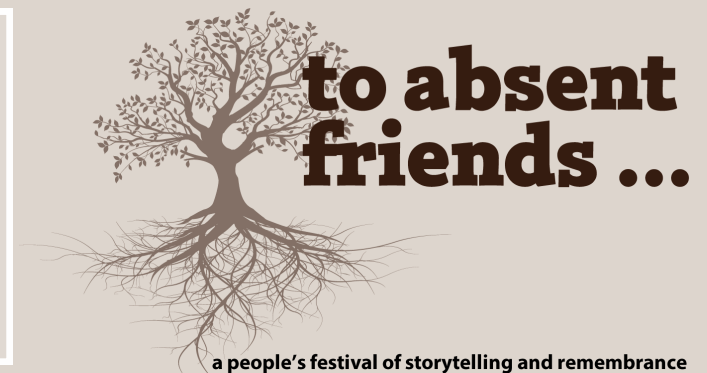


Results

The mats were generally viewed as being acceptable. A local brewer distributed c 15 000 mats to pubs across Edinburgh. The main Edinburgh newspaper ran a prominent article about the mats, the *To Absent Friends* Festival and the value of greater openness about death and dying.

Conclusion

Beer mats appear to be an acceptable way of introducing reflection on loss, grief and mortality into pubs. More research is needed to establish the effectiveness of the mats in prompting storytelling & remembrance.



¹Rumbold, B. (2011). Health promoting palliative care and dying in old age. In Gott, M. & Ingleton, C. (Eds.) Living with ageing and dying: palliative and end of life care for older people (pp. 75-89). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²Emslie C, Hunt K, Lyons A. (2013). The role of alcohol in forging and maintaining friendships amongst Scottish men in midlife. Health Psychol. 2013 Jan;32(1):33-41. doi: 10.1037/a0029874. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23316851>