

Healing Together

Jun 12, 2020 | Rachel Brinton Matthews

'Healing Together' is the second shoot that filmmaker and photographer [Sarah Mason](#) and I have collaborated on. It follows members of an all-male therapy group and shows the different forms of support offered in these spaces including group discussions, partner work, as well as meditation and yoga practices. Men's mental health is a hugely important issue and now, perhaps more than ever, the focus on means of support is extremely pressing. Globally there is a higher suicide rate for men; it is more common for them to be under-diagnosed for mental illnesses; and men are significantly [less likely to access psychological services](#) than women. These statistics have taken a binary view and there are of course additional factors that impact non-binary individuals as well as those from the trans community.

I first contacted Sarah in 2019 after coming across her wonderful project for [Tesco Ireland](#). I was impressed by the emotive nature of her work and the beauty she was able to capture in the most subtle moments. In 'Healing Together,' Sarah's mastery at capturing candid moments came to light as she recognized the importance of a hand gesture and feet shuffling alongside the more obvious moments of communication.

Shot in Sarah's beautiful hometown of Hebden Bridge, the Yorkshire light-gods treated us well, filling the hall with afternoon sun and casting evocative shadows across the surrounding pews. To bring optimism to a potentially more somber story, we created a warm aesthetic throughout the shoot using an earthy color palette for the styling while peppering with pops of louder color in the props. Sarah's love of natural light as a creative tool is apparent in all of her work and during this shoot, we were able to source additional locations within the hall where pockets of afternoon sun gave us the backdrop of dreams. The cast of seven had never worked together before but there was a wonderful connection between the models and after wrapping, they all expressed how cathartic the day had been.

In 'Healing Together,' Sarah and I wanted to present a positive image of therapy, one that shows a variety of people coming together for a myriad of reasons but with a shared goal of support and healing. Shot prior to COVID-19, 'Healing Together' features scenes of what group therapy and support previously looked like - physical contact and close connection.

Whatever the future holds for group therapy, this level of human to human support will be needed.