

Women thrive



By Agnès Cushnie

Last month Pride was invited on a specialist retreat to 'uncover, discover and recover', but what did we find when we looked under the covers?

It was pouring rain. It was the kind of weekend I would normally happily stay at home. But this time I had booked myself to attend a three-day workshop in the countryside and it ended up being a weekend full of sunshine moments.

I travelled by train to a stunning Norfolk countryside retreat, with greenery and secluded surroundings, and filled with warm and aromatic ornaments. I came here to attend the new "Uncover, Discover, Recover Advanced Retreat";

a three-day program devised by therapist (BACP Reg), coach, and hypnotherapist, Sharon McKenna-Daniels. The workshop promised three days of deep mental exploration with a mix of therapeutic group practices and hypnotherapy (visualisation); to connect to deeper parts of our consciousness and unlock the qualities and strengths hidden beneath the beliefs we held. The program also combined physical wellness elements, with tasty treats to indulge during the day, pampering evening treatments, and mouth-watering menus devised by a dedicated catering team. It was definitely luxury, but not to be mistaken for laidback luxury.



"... It was overwhelming at times, but always remained meaningful and purpose-driven"

Above: (left) Therapist (BACP Reg), coach, and hypnotherapist, Sharon McKenna-Daniels and Project Manager Gráinne McKenna-Daniels

made me recall personal events that I, too, buried deep in my consciousness; and enacted tears of relief, whether these were intermingled with, at times, positive or negative feelings. The same evening, after treating myself to a wonderful wellness massage, I re-joined the rest of the group around the dinner table, where frequent fits of laughter echoed across the room, and fragments of friendships started forming. Food was provided by award-winning In-House Chefs, David Little and Kevin Wainwright, current owners of 'Easy Tiger' Asian Cuisine, and 'Gnosh' Catering. We could not have dreamed of better food hosts, and I certainly enjoyed the Michelin star treatment. I think that I slept like a charm that night.



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The second day was focused on understanding past traumas and learning how to act with compassion and kindness with the past versions of us that felt disconnected or at odds with the adult world. This part of the process felt the most emotionally charged to me. It was overwhelming at times, but always remained meaningful and purpose-driven. By the end of this session, I felt emotionally stronger, equipped with a set of tools to understand better how to deal with traumatic responses and to cope better with stress and anxiety.

I ended the day with yet another wellness massage, although, time permitted, I would have also liked to try additional holistic treatments on offer such as Reiki or Crystal & Angel Healing.

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to endings and new beginnings; letting go of the past and moving to the future and however we choose to be. This last part of the process felt easier, maybe as a result of having already let go of my anxieties,

re-acquainted with the past (or child, as Sharon calls it), and worked on healing past traumas. This was a moment of celebration of our successes, dreams, and aspirations for the future. As the workshop ended, I felt a deep sense of gratitude towards the rest of the group; having been privileged enough to go through such a transformative experience with them. When the workshop concluded, we were treated to a wonderful Sunday roast; this time we allowed ourselves to tease and laugh a bit harder, knowing this intimacy circle was drawing to an end (at least in the physical sense).

I do not know if three days will be enough to make that change permanent, but this experience certainly did unlock some past traumas that needed to come out and be dealt with, and it provided innovative techniques and tools to cope with ongoing stress and anxiety, leaving me feeling more restored emotionally.

This is the workshop for every woman who wants to look for a more fulfilled version of herself. It's about looking after your soul and mind, in a serene and peaceful atmosphere. It's about re-discovering friendship and self-love. It's about healing old wounds and empowering the new version of you.

It's been a personal journey starting with anxious thoughts and leaving with life-lasting tools and techniques. Be ready to be pampered, but also to be challenged.

No pain, no gain, as they say.

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