

To give you a flavour of what a residential weekend actually feels like here is a description written by a participant. This was sent to us unasked by Mark because he understood why some may hesitate to come and he wanted others to benefit like he has.



MY STORY

For those of you looking at the website, and wondering – “What’s it all about?”, then let me tell you a bit about myself.

My background was in Policing. I joined in 1971, at 16, and left in 1992, on ill health. Thought I had been there, seen it all and bought the “T” shirt, as they say. After that I travelled the world in different jobs, until I settled down again at home in 2004. I spent 8 years doing a job, until, in 2012, someone who I thought was a best friend started a course of action which resulted in me walking the streets at 2 o’clock in the morning, valuing my self worth, and, one morning, I considered the ultimate. I had never been so low in my life.

Had it not been for the support of my wife, I wouldn’t be here now. I then went on a course in 2013, and met Mike, one of the founders of Unload. He explained to me what it was about, initially “After Armed Conflict”, but invited me along to one of their weekends at Unstone Grange. I turned up on the first Friday afternoon, and immediately thought “this is a bit strange”. Let me explain. Instead of registering, signing in, sitting in an anonymous room, before being introduced to the others, I went into the large kitchen. The kettle was on, and a few people were already there. We got to know each other slowly, and the weekend progressed. The kitchen became the focal point, early morning mugs of tea, and help preparing the evening meal, if help was required.

We meditated. We talked. We cooked together. We sat outside one evening and “chewed the fat”, over a homemade curry. I got involved in things I never dreamed that I would. But there was one thread throughout the weekend. It was about ME. And about everyone else who turned up. It was about that person as an individual, and where they were at that time in their life. If you wanted to join in, you joined in. If you wanted space, there was space. On Saturday afternoon, one of the lads opened up to me, and I went into a quiet room, and wrote a poem about his experience. And I shared mine with him.

I went home on the Sunday afternoon exhausted. I had done no exercise or exertions, but what I had done was use my mind. Involve myself in the weekend. Immerse myself if you want to put it that way. And, on leaving, I felt better about myself. It would be churlish to say I was cured. I wasn’t. But in June this year, I went on another weekend, ostensibly to help out, but involving myself in the whole weekend. Again, I came home exhausted. The old grey matter had taken a battering. But, once again, I felt better in myself. Once again, I had got involved in things I never dreamed I would. But the same thread continued throughout the June weekend, as it had at Unstone Grange. It was about ME, and where I was in life, and more importantly, where I wanted to be.

I still have lapses. I still get that little man on my shoulder sometimes. But believe me, it ain’t half as bad as it used to be. Not even ten per cent as bad. Unload may not be a miracle cure, but it has got some bloody good people, who care about you as a person.

So, if you’re still reading, give it a try. Take that first step. Get in touch, or go on a weekend. It might not be for you. But at least you took that first step?

MARK.