

Tried and tested: THE HOFFMAN PROCESS

Each month, we investigate the best therapies on offer. This month – how the Hoffman Process can kick-start your life

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I've never found it easy to get out of an emotional rut. Even when I knew I had a lot to be grateful for, I couldn't care less. I was a BBC producer, with loving friends and a decent flat, but I was also exhausted at weekends, often worried and generally felt grey. It took being diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 42 to wake up and face how stuck I'd become in life. I realised my physical recovery depended on my emotional wellbeing. And so, six months after my diagnosis, on a friend's recommendation, I arrived at Florence House, the Sussex seaside venue for the Hoffman Process.

There were 23 other people on the course, from housewives to garden designers, city types and retired policemen. Most felt frustrated with some aspects of life and had yet to find fulfilment in relationships or careers. It felt odd to be thrown in with so many strangers for such a personal experience, but Florence House and these 23 others were to be my universe for the next eight days.

On day one, we all sat nervously and met our three teachers (all Hoffman instructors have been previous participants in the process, so they know what you're going through). They helped us to see how unwanted behaviour in our current lives, such as compulsive anxiety or shame-based fears, could have been learnt in childhood. During the course of the next eight days, we would learn how to identify this early conditioning,



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and how to resolve the issues it had created for us.

The days were filled with demanding emotional tasks, from journal writing and roleplay through to guided meditations and group discussion. Through 'expressive body work' (a way to release feelings physically), I discovered that long-held emotions were not just thoughts, but stored energy. I was stunned to realise the impact my past had had on my physicality. My facial expressions softened and, after the first few days, I held myself differently. I started to feel wonderful. I was shedding fearful beliefs and old resentments. I felt as though I was coming alive for the first time.

A lot of the time, we worked as a group in noisy, energetic sessions. At other times, we were silent. At first, I was disappointed not to be seeing a therapist on a one-to-one basis, but the Hoffman Process isn't about talking – it's about experiencing your feelings in a different way and learning a deeper way to connect with the powerful emotional imprint of childhood.

Nearly a year on, I am living the rewards of my Hoffman Process. I left my job and am about to join the Royal Court's creative writing programme (something I can get genuinely enthusiastic about), and I'm hoping to become a therapist. It's a shame that I waited until a serious illness before I addressed my unhappiness, but now I can say how much more aware I am about what I want out of life and how to get it. Whatever the future holds, I know I'm up for it.