

PhysicallyFIT

PhillyFit Retreat III

A life in a day of the PhillyFIT Retreat

part 5 of a 6 piece mini-series

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When you think of retreat, you think spa, relaxing, mental escapes from reality and work, walks on the beach, good food, good friends, lazy afternoons and of course, sleeping in after those wine-filled evenings. But not on this fitness retreat. Well, most of the days included those things but with an added element of exercise disguised as something fun. And no retreat would be complete without healthy food, self improvement workshops and time to get away from even the people at the retreat. (Thank goodness it was a really big house!!) The best part of this retreat was that everything was brought to you, rather than searching out far and wide or traveling miles to get what you were looking for. And the On-site staff of experts was also a great resource.

All kidding aside, the week-long retreat was really a treat to be had by those attending as well as those participating, presenting or organizing. Every day started with a long walk on the beach regardless of the fact that it was sub-zero the second day we got there with 20+ mph winds...If you did not feel like getting up, you could just eat a scrumptious breakfast with all sorts of gourmet treats or go to the local gym for your standard fare of exercise. But don't overdo that part, cause there is plenty still left for the rest of the morning - Flip Fitness, personal training (read as 'see how hard can you work your muscles to fatigue'), Pilates, kick boxing or the Tryad Adventure Race (how far can you run carrying a brick?? And memorizing trivia along the way without a paper or pencil to write it down with!)

After all that exercise, we were all pretty hungry for lunch. Each day we had something different for breakfast, lunch and dinner. No matter how you eat at home, you definitely ate better here - all organic food from Whole Foods, and Joanna as our 'live-in' nutritionist and a constant reminder of how we should be eating and what we should be eating. "Do you really eat like that??" was the most often question asked. Joanna tried to explain why she does eat broccoli or other greens for breakfast and the importance of incorporating whole foods and vegetables daily - better energy

from better fuels. Joanna helped to introduce new ways of cooking and new ways of preparing meals to help balance blood sugar levels to avoid cravings and energy crashes. One morning (with the help of John Fairchild, weight loss manager) we made three different kinds of oatmeal (instant, old fashioned and steel cut) using almond milk (vs. regular cow's milk) and did a taste test. We also pan toasted almonds, cranberries and walnuts in ghee (clarified butter) for some added flavor, protein and natural sweetness. Can you guess which oatmeal won?

The fun part with meals was that everyone was able to participate - cook, chop, slice, dice and make julienne fries....ok, healthy ones from sweet potatoes (Susie Beiler's idea - she came later in the week). Don't forget the cleaning though (gosh it seemed endless). Every day was something different - lunches always had something made from leftovers. You can't waste good food!! One day it was grilled wild salmon chopped up into a salad made from parsley, avocado, olives and other greens put onto a wrap or whole grain bread or we put the quinoa on the salad. Jami made a great chili with cornbread meal while others took turns picking what to make from the fresh vegetables and pantry full of items. There was a recipe book (created by the nutritionists) that all the participants went home with so they could make the meals at



home, not just at the retreat week.

After lunch we had lectures (nutrition, dental hygiene, body balance, etc), massage, reiki, reflexology, foot treatments, beauty make-overs, and general 'make-you-feel-good' wellness sessions. If you did not know what shiatsu or reiki or aromatherapy were, you could find out first hand what the benefits were from each treatment. Some people after one or two sessions looked radiant and like the weight was lifted off their shoulders - issues they did not know were weighing them down. Then you needed to make sure your skin felt and looked as good as you now did! Cindy Hunter was there one day with her mobile spa. She did amazing distressing with her heated herbal neck wraps, therapeutic foot soaks, hand massage, skin treatments, aromatherapy, and body care with creams...a total delight. Even Lloyd, Mr. Macho, got a foot treatment from Susan with the traveling wellness woman Susan Shaw.

After all the pampering and self-nurturing and healing sessions in the afternoon, it was time for either a nap or dinner (or both). We seemed to fixate on food regularly and well, um, often. We always seemed to work up an appetite and luckily there was always someone in the kitchen making something so you were not alone! We even tried a frozen fruit smoothie with a handful of spinach! Yummy it really was.

Dinner was always with everyone present and participating. Wine - well, we had to have that - was plentiful (and it was red - the one full of antioxidants!). We always had a healthy protein, healthy carbohydrate, and many green veggies as well. Not like you had to eat them at every meal, but I was surprised that by day four, some were even eating greens for breakfast along with Joanna. And they did feel better! After dinner and wine, some of us took out the Angel cards and did some psychic readings. Well, maybe not so psychic but it is amazing to read what cards you picked. It was great fun too! I think Lloyd was the most surprised when his cards totally spelled out what he was thinking. (Twilight Zone?) We watched rented movies some nights with homemade in-the-pot popcorn or frozen yogurt. We actually saw *The Secret* the first night we were there to start off the week with our inspirations - little did we know that the next morning's beach walk would include searching for the gratitude shell or stone, or seeing your dream house.

Then it was time to go to bed and look forward to another fun filled day with something new to learn and experience. Bed time was earlier than planned. After all, that was just an example of one day at our retreat (we were exhausted!!!) **BUT TRUTH BE KNOWN WE COULD NOT WAIT FOR THE NEXT DAY TO BEGIN!!!**

It was far more than a retreat. It was being, learning, doing, new things, new people. The friendships acquired were once in a lifetime. The learning tools were immeasurable. And all that is what made this a PhillyFIT week a real retreat!!

THE PURPOSE OF A RETREAT

By: Mary M. Nearpass, MA, MS

"When we neglect what matters most to us, then that becomes the matter with us". M. M. Nearpass.

What is a retreat? Webster's describes it as "the act or process of withdrawal...a receding from a position to a place/haven/sanctuary/refuge that offers peace, privacy and security". I like Jennifer Louden's assertion that a retreat is "An act of self-nurturing, a radical leap into the hallowed halls of selfhood."

Why do we go on retreat? How is it that you are going to take time out of your busy life so that we can be together, and you can go more deeply into your own inner life?

There are three reasons; the three R's: Return, Rest and Remember. From my training and experiences, these are the purpose of a retreat.

Return is our returning to essence, to our own true nature, to that part of us that feels its connection to all things. Every spiritual tradition around the world talks about the fact that we are made up of a true essence, but it has an outer shell called the ego. The fears that we pick up along the way become like clouds that block the light of our own true nature, of who we really are.

At a retreat, we are trying to find the doorways, the portals or the gateways to our inner selves that reach beyond the ego and its fears. I like using the metaphor that within us all there is a light; a sun that is always shining. Oftentimes an overlay of clouds hide the sun, yet the sun is always there. I guess you could say a retreat is a cloud-clearing maneuver. At our Winter Retreat, we will be talking about practices, and ultimately practicing together, various methods that help us clear the clouds. When the retreat is over and you return to your "real world", the strength and light of our inner, true light will be there, hopefully closer than when it was before your came.

The second of the R's is for rest. We live in such a busy world that I believe most of us are sleep and rest deprived. We DO so much that we become human doings as opposed to being our true selves and becoming human beings. During our retreat, we can put down doing for a while, and enter a state of being where we can finally take the time in our rest to listen deeply, to hear the voice of essence, to hear the voice of our spirit that always speaks inside of us. Additionally, simply to rest for its

own sake. The third of the R's is for Remember. Remember what we are doing here on this planet earth. As the famous author Rick Warren so eloquently wrote, "The Purpose Driven Life", think about the times that you have really remembered that.

Have you ever had the chance to sit with someone who was dying as they harvested the wisdom of their life? In my own experiences, while they were facing death, they learned how to live more deeply, more authentically and more truly. They ask themselves the big questions: "Who am I? What am I doing here? Am I just this body, or is there something that lives beyond this body? And if there is something beyond this body, then what is the purpose of being here? As the incomparable group, Earth, Wind and Fire so eloquently put it, "It's all about love. That's what we are doing here". Mother Teresa, whom I admired deeply, used to say that the purpose of taking human birth is simply to "learn how to give and receive love." That is what we are remembering. If we remember what is our soul's purpose, then it becomes much easier NOT to get lost in the ego and its fears, and to stay present to that part of us that is naturally joyful, loving and ultimately quite capable of giving and receiving love.

Specifically at the 2nd ANNUAL PHILLYFIT BEACHFRONT WINTER RETREAT, we will be reacquainting ourselves with our bodies, challenging them and learning to trust their capabilities in order to recognize not only their strength, but their beauty and by honoring all that they help us to do on a dally basis. We will also be opening our hearts and minds to new perspectives. Lastly, spiritual enlightenment goes hand-in-hand with physical

enlightenment. Although this proposition may be scary at first, because many of us have not been taught how to really listen, know and engage all four components of the self: Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual. We will be joining forces with determined spirits.

Therefore, that is the purpose of our time together at the SECOND ANNUAL PHILLYFIT WINTER RETREAT; to return to our essence, to rest deeply so that we can hear our soul's voice and its guidance, and to remember that we are all spiritual beings here to love and to serve.

Retreat, to me, is a very important part of life that we rarely take the time to do. Without periodic times of retreat, it is easy for our inner light to extinguish. DO you think it is a coincidence that we use the term "BURNOUT?".... Every time we begin to get too busy, we are at risk of burning ourselves out, of losing our idealism, or experiencing what has been called, "compassion fatigue." A pretty wild phrase for sure, but compassion fatigue is when we forget our own good hearts and souls, and we end up resenting the very people that we set out to love and to serve.

Have I convinced you of the utmost importance in taking time out for our retreat? If you do not want to burn out so that we will not fatigue our compassion, start 2008 off right so your own good heart can keep on shining!!

For more details to register call 215-396-0268.

Half or full week packages available.

