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workshops

Achilles Heel

by Miriam Silver

Zoe was always threatening to change her life although I never believed she would, I just thought she was all talk spouting 'all in our hands', 'up to ourselves' until I realised there was something in what she was saying.

I must admit I was finding our coffee mornings a bit dull always having to listen to her latest fixation 'opening your own business', 'doing a course'.

She had done both of these, unsuccessfully and now she was into Mindfulness, at which point I switched off hoping my lack of interest would deter her.

I have known her a long time, we're distantly related, same age, children about to leave home, empty nest syndrome.

"Still young enough, got lots to look forward to," she urged, which caused my mind to go blank so I just smiled.

I had always wished I was more like her, she seemed to sail through having great ideas which came to nothing, but at least for the time gave her a harmless interest.

For so long I'd been obsessed with family and home I suppose my identity got lost somewhere along the way, I just jogged along on the same path, accepting the status quo.

I woke up to find I'd been gazing into space and hadn't heard Zoe,

"Ok then, it's settled, I'll collect you and we'll go, be good for us, I'll send the money, I'll drive, you can pay me later," and she left.

It was when I was in her car that I asked, "where's this place then, hope it's near the sea, I fancy the beach?" only to be disappointed by,

“Too far to do that, I think you’ll like it, middle of nowhere, peace and quiet.” Sounded alright.

After what seemed like an endless car journey we were met by our Team Leader clad head to toe in ‘sweats’ who, while showing us our rooms kept up a diatribe explaining the aims of this weekend course.

“Just dump your bags, there’s a big timetable to get through, better get started,” he said, leaving no room for requests or protests.

And that set the tone for the rest of our time there in addition I realised I looked retrograde was hungry, tired and wished I had not allowed Zoe to have her way.

The whole course was built on team building and having been immediately shepherded into teams, I noticed I was in my old wrong gear and had to trust various random partners, all clad in modern gear, to manoeuvre dangerous, difficult activities.

I remember having to lean back against this unknown team member, right back, “trust, go on, back, trust...” which I did, until I was almost parallel to the floor. My partner was meant to catch me, only she didn’t. I think we were both to blame, I fell in the wrong direction and she was ruminating.

Standing in a circle, holding lighted candles, I have an aversion to the smell of melting wax, so didn’t get off to a good start, Goanth whom we were emulating, sat cross legged on the floor, hands clasped pointing to heaven, eyes closed, all I managed was to feel tired and uncooperative.

We did all this before we’d had dinner, by which time I was ready for meat - or fish- and veg. No such luck. Apparently I was attending a Vegan Mindfulness weekend where food was considered incidental and only tomorrow’s activities were to be discussed, within team limits, followed by meditation and dry biscuits and quorn.

I did stay for the Paintballing, Zip Wire, Absailing all timetabled for our last day, keeping our something or other close to the team grindstone.

When it came to the face to face shouting, ‘let it all out’ I decided I didn’t have the energy to look at comparative strangers with anything but tolerance.

It was kind of Zoe to organise a weekend away like that,

n.b. remember to re-pay her.

Meanwhile I have discovered that it’s too late to change, my Achilles Heel has been exposed, my weaknesses glaringly obvious. I’ll just have to live with them.

I’m sure the family will join me.