

# Learning to let go

Two women learn to live in the moment, by taking two very different breaks

## When she was made redundant, Maeve Hosea decided to take stock



To outsiders, my life may well seem rich and full – I've got wonderful friends and a busy social life. But I have begun to feel jaded and increasingly angry for reaching 35 without having fulfilled my potential, professionally or personally.

I greet the New Year feeling numb and unmotivated, but lack the courage to do anything about it. My job no longer challenges me and I'm lacking a meaningful relationship. So when redundancy strikes, I experience conflicting emotions of freedom and anxiety. A friend lends me a copy of John C Parkin's provocatively titled book *F\*\*k It: The Ultimate Spiritual Way*. Parkin believes that change is always possible and that life actively responds when you learn to let go. He explains this

through a blend of gentle, non-religious spiritualism, common sense and humour. Although he is best known for his one-week Italian retreats, Parkin will soon hold his first weekend in Herefordshire, and I book a place.

It is twilight when I reach Penrhos, a restored manor house. I'm heartened to see a living room with a roaring fire and friendly faces. Over a delicious dinner, I meet Parkin, his Italian wife Gaia, and the other 19 guests – a refreshing mix of normal people, united in their desire to shift something. The group includes a dynamic, fortysomething events organiser, a woman in her twenties unsure about her career and a middle-aged professional dealing with the demands of caring for a 90-year-old mother. Wine and conversation flow. ➤



Fact box  
F\*\*k it weekends  
in the UK cost  
from £300. Go to  
[outsidetheasylum.eu](http://outsidetheasylum.eu)  
for details of  
forthcoming retreats





➔ The next morning we all gather in a nearby barn. Parkin's methods borrow from a variety of schools of thought and his tone is always light and tinged with self-deprecating humour.

#### EBB AND FLOW

We do Chi Kung, breathing exercises, free-expression movement sessions and visualisation. At one point, Parkin asks us to imagine we're sitting in the back of a limousine, living and experiencing life's ebb and flow. He's not discouraging plans per se, but rather the way we fixate on the outcome, and he encourages living fully in the present.

Later on, we're sent into the countryside in search of an epiphany. It's a funny idea. I think of the times in my life when I have craved an epiphany: leaving university aged 22; sitting on beautiful beaches in Brazil at 28 – but they eluded me.

I set off over a stile and down a sun-drenched hill. Three fields later, after a close shave with a barbed wire fence and a leap over a brook, something dawns on me: I've always felt the need to travel far to get a sense of achievement. I recall a Buddhist philosophy that everything you need for your own happiness is inside you already, it's just about drawing it out. I realise how often I put my life on hold waiting for the things I think will make me happy.

While I won't say my life has radically changed since that weekend, I am now trying to live in the moment, and accepting both good and bad as inevitable parts of life. And there is no denying it is much more enjoyable this way.