

A week of wellness

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FIONA SMITH - DIGITAL ACCOUNT MANAGER 07 FEB 2019

“Wellness” - a buzzword of 2018, which I have no doubt will continue throughout 2019. But what does it really mean?

There are various definitions, including:

“...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” – The World Health Organization

“a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential.” – The National Wellness Institute

These definitions seem clear and easy to understand. However, as usual with anything

related to the health and fitness industry, the wellness space is crowded, contradictory and confusing. Is it a trend, fad or here to stay? There are cafes, fitness studios, wearable tech and even holiday packages that promise to improve our health and wellbeing. However, I can't help but feel that "wellness" in this sense is just another form of consumerism and is more elitist than other fitness fads. According to Instagram, if you aren't eating expensive acai bowls or drinking kombucha tea in the local café before spending your weekends at the overpriced yoga studio around the corner, you aren't even close to achieving wellness!! Where the elite Instagrammers were once boasting designer handbags, they are now going to exclusive yoga retreats abroad and posing with green smoothies. They are no longer attending music festivals and camping in muddy fields, they are attending wellbeing festivals, which seem to have popped up all over the UK.

Despite my scepticism of the phrase "wellness" and how it is portrayed, the definitions absolutely make sense and are how I strive to live my life. To do this, I aim to find a work-life balance, exercise regularly, eat healthy (most of the time), and explore new ways to enjoy myself and relax. Holidays, not surprisingly, are one of my favourite ways to relax. The perfect holiday for me includes being in the sunshine, delicious food and wine, some light exercise and a touch of retail therapy. So, as the cross-country skiing holiday I booked for January drew nearer, I started to wonder what I had signed up for? Essentially, a week of exercise?!

The week of cross country skiing in Austria commenced and I instantly forgot my fears about the week. The snow was sparkling and the sun was shining as we skied through magical forests, up gruelling steep climbs, and down speedy hills with breath-taking panorama views. We stopped in cosy, remote huts for beer and frankfurters – how else would you fuel a day of exercise in Austria? Hours were spent skiing and concentrating on the technique and tracks. For most of the days my, normally overactive, mind was completely focussed on what I was doing at that moment. The furthest I thought in to the future was the evening, thinking about getting home to the cosy apartment for a gin and tonic. It's all about balance after all?!

It is this experience that got me thinking about wellness. I truly believe this was a week of wellness. After a hectic festive season, I came home from Austria feeling relaxed, healthy

and with a decluttered mind. Whilst wellness is often represented in the media by expensive health foods and elite yoga retreats, my active week in the winter sun taught me it is about focussing on yourself, escaping daily pressures and having a balance of health, fitness and fun. Although a week of skiing won't be a regular occurrence, I will make a conscious effort to take time out, focus on myself and do activities that will benefit my overall wellbeing.

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