

My name is Jim Bates, and I am the president and CEO of Business Improvement Group (BIG). I am a leadership coach, consultant, and instructor. I attended the Peace Retreat, hosted by Myra and Jimmy, with my wife of 40 years, and my coworker who is the vice president and COO of BIG.

I was not sure what to expect but based on the connotations that are associated with the word “peace”, I assumed that I would get my proverbial batteries charged and some needed rest. I am getting more of that since attending the retreat.

I would say that the peace retreat gives you tools to combat the enemy of peace and the chaos associated with its absence. It required transparency and vulnerability to get to the root causes of chaos in my life. It took courage and what might be considered hard work to be honest with myself and do it in front of both people that I know as well as total strangers.

The horses made that work much easier. Somehow, these beautiful animals have an innate ability to read you, and you can’t bluff them. They made me realize that I was trying to bluff myself or make excuses. In all humans there is what has been termed a “wall of self-preservation”. We use this wall to protect ourselves and behind it lurks the things that we are trying to prove, that we are afraid of losing, and/or that we are trying to hide – often unconsciously. This experience is helping me deal with these in a more intentional and proactive way. I will use the resulting action plan to be more consistent in my self-improvement and relationships.

Myra, Jimmy, and the horses comprise a team that is perfectly balanced. They are gracious hosts that are intentional yet adaptive. They were able to take an eclectic group of individuals and form a team that got to the performing stage as fast as I have ever seen it done. Within the first hours of the retreat, a safe space was created and reinforced with a culture of trust and empathy that grew each day. This environment helped me understand more clearly, that individuals who help people every day, also need to focus on their personal peace and health – perhaps like putting on your own oxygen mask before helping others.

In summary, I am more self-aware, intentional, and equipped to fight for the highest possible good in my own life and the lives of others and to pursue peace that exceeds understanding. I am better equipped to fight chaos in my life and in the lives of those I am given an opportunity to lead, coach, and teach. I would give my highest endorsement and recommendation to the Peace Retreat. You owe it to yourself and those in your life to attend and participate in this transformational experience.