



# Young, free and cooking up adventure!

By Lai Man

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Every year Kidney Care UK hosts a weekend of adventure, creativity and friendship for young adults with chronic kidney disease. The Young Adult Kidney Group (YAKG) residential weekend offers a chance to rediscover daredevil youthfulness and have fun with kindred spirits who ‘get it’.

**Lai Man**, one of 60 who attended this year’s weekend at Mount Cook Adventure Centre in Derbyshire, reveals why it is such an inspiring experience...

Hello there ... my name is Lai and like so many other attendees from last year’s YAKG residential weekend, I have been buzzing with excitement to return ever since!

When I first found out about the weekend, it felt like a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ opportunity, but what is so fantastic is you get the chance to go again the next year! This is when the magic happens as it becomes an annual fixture in your calendar; something to look forward to.

The Mount Cook Centre becomes a ‘home away from home’, where you foster friendships that stand the test of time – and the long distances that, without this wonderful weekend, would separate us from each other.

## Being with people who ‘get it’

The moment you enter the centre’s front doors, you are surrounded by young adults who’ve all experienced the same long and winding kidney journey as you.

It is such a comfort to finally find your tribe – people who understand and make no judgement because we are all the same; we share the same gripes about hospital waiting rooms, dialysis transport and towering boxes of dialysate. But we also encourage and inspire each other to achieve more than we could ever think possible ourselves.

We threw ourselves into the amazing array of activities at Mount Cook: archery, rock climbing, via ferrata, and land-carting, to name a few.

If you aren’t hearing the screams of delight going down the zipwire, then it’s cheers of encouragement at the base of the high ropes. Being on home peritoneal dialysis (HPD), I had become so used to feeling as if I was bubble-wrapped with my feet firmly on the ground. However, the Kidney Care UK volunteers reassured us Mount Cook staff were aware of our fistulas and catheters (which need to be protected when fitting our harnesses) and urged us to challenge ourselves and just have fun.

## A chance to be brash, daredevil and YOUNG

Kidney disease often takes away that brash, daredevil youthfulness from us far too early as we take on the responsibility of controlling our



## Thank YOU!

A big thank you to all Kidney Patient Associations (KPAs) – especially Exeter KPA, Salford KPA and Newcastle KPA – and volunteers who took on fundraising events to support this incredible residential weekend. We could not have pulled this amazing event off without you!



diet, medication and treatment schedules. But there is nothing that makes you feel more like a twenty-something again than flinging yourself off the ledge of the zipwire tower!

My favourite was via ferrata, which is outside horizontal rock climbing on metal staples pegged into the on-site quarry wall, whilst connected to a harness – such an exhilarating activity! You are supervised, but it is you up there, alone, traversing the wall, deciding where to put your hands and feet to get to the other side. The sense of achievement was overwhelming. I haven’t felt so strong and independent in a long time. For every activity, accommodation was made to match each person’s capabilities, so everyone could meet their own challenges.

We all came back to the mess hall for meals with bright smiles and red cheeks, exalting the highs of activities we had conquered. The weekend’s packed schedule of activities is sandwiched between kidney-friendly meals using Kidney Kitchen recipes, catering for a range of dietary needs.

## Remembering old friends

As someone on fluid restriction, the blistering heatwave was overwhelming and I confess to spending time indoors, escaping the heat, in the crafting room for an array of creative pursuits like modelling, painting, decoupage and diamond painting.

Along with friends, we painted decorative rocks as keepsakes of our weekend. There is a beautiful tradition for returning members to craft something to commemorate young adults who passed away during the year. In this reflective time, we celebrated their lives and how they still continue to inspire us to carry on.

We all felt so grateful for being able to attend this wonderful weekend. It can be incredibly difficult to organise holidays away from home due to medical commitments, but Kidney Care UK made it easy for us. As a HPD patient, dialysing away from home can be scary, but the Kidney Care UK volunteers were so supportive and helped organise fluid deliveries

and ensured I had a room to myself with an ensuite, for (dialysis) set up. There is always help on hand, to get the machine, cases of ancillaries and other medical paraphernalia upstairs, where I was then greeted by a corridor full of other PD patients! The chance to be myself in a crowd of people who ‘get it’ where I can complain at the breakfast table about ‘drain pain’ and ‘fluid retention’ without the need to explain, is one I deeply treasure.

## Being with my kidney-family

It’s a very special weekend run by the most passionate people in the kidney community who donate their time, smiles and expertise. People like Chef Paul Ripley (pictured above with Masterchef winner **Shuaib Ali**), who ran the Kidney Kitchen masterclass, enjoyed by everyone. I leave the weekend feeling stronger, and with a fresh perspective on what I can take on in life. I count the days until I can come back and do it all again with this wonderful family I’ve joined.