

HEALTHY LIVING



Photo illustration by KEITH HADLEY / COX NEWS SERVICE

Life coach can help you get back on track

BY VIKKI CONWELL
Cox News Service

Are you stuck? In a rut? Having a season of discontentment? Perhaps you could use a little coaching to get you back into the game of life.

"People have been struggling with change their whole lives, but struggle doesn't work," says Martha Beck, a life coach and author of "The Four Day Win," a book that shows people how to achieve weight-loss success by finding inner peace.

"Change that arises naturally and organically will last, but changes made by gritting your teeth will not," she says.

When it comes to health and fitness, especially, gradual change is best, Beck says.

Your mind can decide to eat nothing but broccoli and turkey, but your body and soul will follow their own agenda, she says.

"Get the mind out of the picture and let the heart and soul make the choices."

Life coaches are like personal trainers for your life. They are like coaches whose players have the skills to perform but need a good playbook to guide them to a victory.

"In coaching, nothing is broken, therefore nothing needs to be fixed," says Nancy Gerber, an Atlanta life coach. Clients are capable of solving their own problems but need someone to help them through the process, she says.

Let's suppose you have a little weight to lose.

A life coach can help you overcome fears that have kept you from losing the weight in the past and identify emotional triggers that cause you to eat. Once those barriers have been removed, they outline incremental steps to put your health/fitness goal within

reach and create a healthier life.

Life coaching is not therapy (although many coaches have a psychology background). In fact, most sessions, which range from \$75-\$225 each, are conducted over the phone or by e-mail. If you have deep-rooted emotional issues, you should see a therapist, Beck says.

"If life is a ball of yarn, therapy helps you unravel the tangles," Gerber says. "Coaching helps you knit a sweater."

Life coaches ask questions to help people think about their lives differently and start making deliberate decisions and choices such as, "If you woke up tomorrow and life were perfect, what would it look like?" Then they help clients develop action plans in areas of health/fitness, career, personal relationships and finance.

Two years ago, Atlanta resident Diane Nardin contacted a life coach to gain more balance and personal time in her hectic life. The director of a large accounting firm said the sessions have been challenging yet rewarding.

TAKE CONTROL

Follow these steps to set and keep your goals.

- Target a life area (personal, professional, health/fitness). Find a specific element that you want to improve.
- Establish a goal or intention. Phrase it in a positive way — such as "increase fitness and health by exercising three times a week," or "adopt a healthy eating plan." Create realistic and doable goals based on your lifestyle and other commitments.
- Pick one goal at a time. Commit to only

"It's hard work, and you learn things about yourself that you're not always excited to find out," says Nardin, who has developed a close relationship with her trusted adviser.

"You're looking at how you're living your life, and not all of us do well at that every day."

Beck agrees and says that no one has it all figured out, so everyone can benefit from some coaching.

"Life is designed itself to teach us, but a life coach is a nice luxury," she says.

what you can handle. You cannot add to your plate without taking something off.

- Set small steps. Break it down into minor, attainable intervals, such as not eating after 8 p.m. or not buying sugary snacks.
 - Assign a timetable. Also, establish a benchmark that lets you know you're making progress, such as losing an inch off your waistline.
 - Measure the cost. Determine what you are willing to sacrifice in time, money, etc.
 - Identify your support system. You'll need people to encourage and support you.
- Source: Nancy Gerber, Stepping Stones, www.sstones.com



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EXPLORE WHO YOU ARE

Coaches ask a variety of questions to help clients think about their lives in a different way and discover more options. Here's a sample of questions during an initial session:

- What do you hope to accomplish through coaching, and what will mark success for you?
- What do you really want in your life — something that you otherwise wouldn't expect to receive?
- What are your passions; what brings you joy? What do you do in life that makes you feel really whole, complete and fulfilled?
- If time and money didn't matter, where would you be, what would you be doing and who would be with you?
- How do you want to be remembered?

Source: International Coach Federation

HELP YOURSELF

If you're a do-it-yourselfer, here are some resources to help you help yourself:

- "Life Coach in a Box," a self-help kit
- "The Life Coaching Handbook" by Curly Martin
- "Life Coaching for Dummies" by Jeni Mumford
- International Coach Federation: www.coachfederation.org

Source: Georgia Coach Association, International Coach Federation

DON'T DELAY

Here are some of the most common reasons we procrastinate when pursuing our goals and how to overcome them:

- Perfectionism. Don't expect to be perfect in the execution of the project or goal.
- Fear of failure. You must believe that you're a success regardless of achieving goals.
- Fear of disapproval. Find others who are supportive and approve of you no matter what.
- Feeling overwhelmed. You don't have to do everything at once. Break down the goal into smaller and manageable steps. ■

Source: CoachVille, a training resource for life coaches

CLIP 'N' KEEP!

HIRING TIPS

- Identify your objectives for working with a coach.
- Get referrals (go to www.coachfederation.org for profiles).
- Interview three coaches and ask them about their experience, qualifications and skills and ask for at least two references. Some coaches have backgrounds in psychology and counseling, while others have six months of online training.
- Request a complimentary session.
- Select a coach who fits your needs, style, schedule and budget. Make sure there's a connection.

