



FIND YOUR FOCUS

How a Life Coach Can Help

*Do you feel stuck? Not sure of the next step in your life?
Here's how a life coach can help you clarify your thinking.*

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Jim was a very successful attorney in a large law firm. He'd practiced for more than three decades and, for the most part, really enjoyed the work.

Yet something kept tugging at him. It was the idea of leaving, maybe starting a small business and enjoying his hobbies in semi-retirement. Whenever he thought about it, he felt happy and excited. Yet when he started to take action, he'd get paralyzed. The voice inside him said, "What? Are you nuts? That small business will never work, and you'd be crazy to leave this secure situation!"

So Jim went into the office day after day, working and dreaming and feeling torn.

Jim got tired of feeling conflicted and, after hearing about a life coach through a friend, began to work with her. It didn't take long for Jim to learn that his inner-critic voice, his "saboteur," was keeping him stuck in the status quo. Over a few months of coaching sessions, Jim learned to quiet down this saboteur voice and bring up the volume on his "wise voice," the voice that told him he could really do this.

Within six months, Jim had left his firm, opened up a small home-repair business, and begun spending time in his workshop and golfing. He didn't look back and now wishes he'd made the move sooner.

If you're feeling a bit like Jim—or you're just not sure what your next move in life should be—here's how to figure out if a life coach can help you, too.

DO ANY OF THESE SITUATIONS HIT HOME?

Life coaching is all about you and your goals, whether you currently have them or need to create some. It's about closing the gap between where you are now and where you want to be. Simply put, a life coach works with you to figure out, articulate, and achieve your goals.

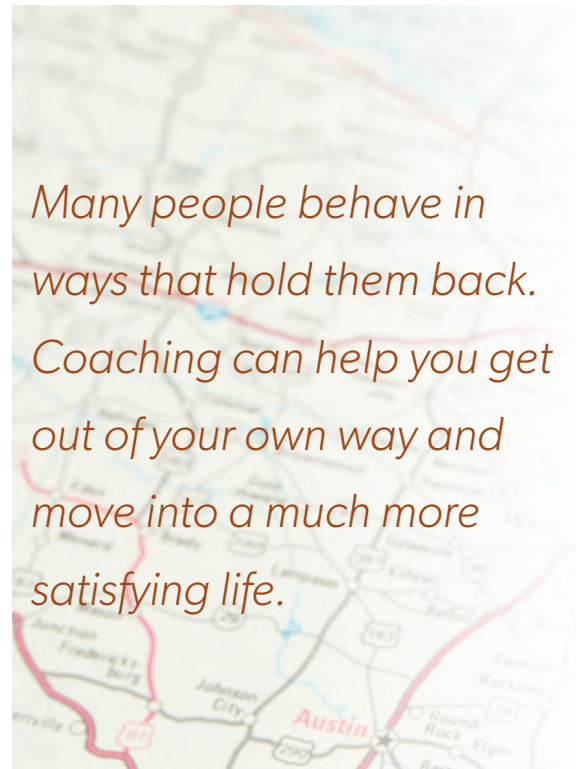
Many people behave in ways that hold them back. Coaching can help you get out of your own way and move into a much more satisfying life. Maybe you're going through a career or life transition. Maybe you want to fulfill a secret dream. Or you want more work-life balance. You want to spend more time and energy on what matters to you. You want to feel more confident and centered. You may want to work on and determine what your life purpose truly is. Maybe you're just stuck like Jim.

A life coach can work with you to figure out and articulate your goals, and you can powerfully change the trajectory of your life. Plus, working with a coach is fun (really!).

If you're wondering how life coaching can help you

personally, ask yourself whether any of these situations feel familiar:

- I'm lost. How do I stop living aimlessly and find a focus for my life?
- I'm stuck. How do I get unstuck so I can move forward and enjoy life?



- I lack confidence. I don't believe in myself. How can I gain more self-confidence?
- I'm overwhelmed and exhausted. Is there something better for me?
- I have a big decision to make (retirement, moving to another place, etc.), but I'm paralyzed. How can I make the right decision for me?
- My job is driving me crazy, but I feel trapped. What should I do?
- I have no work-life balance and want that. How can I get it?

- I've always wanted to do _____, but I hold myself back. How can I achieve my dreams?
- How do I create the life I want?
- Why am I here? What's my life purpose?
- Supporting the actions you'll take to determine and achieve your goals. Often, these actions are relatively small but make a tremendous impact

Life coaching can help in all of these situations.

HOW A LIFE COACH CAN HELP

Professionally trained life coaches are trained to support clients and provide access to state-of-the-art coaching techniques, tools, and resources. They can provide the following benefits:

- Acting as a partner to support you in determining and creating your best life
- Providing structure and focus needed for you to stay in action
- Helping you find purpose, direction, and clarity
- Helping you find meaning and fulfillment
- Reducing your stress and worry
- Helping you create better, healthier relationships
- Maximizing your personal and professional potential

SHOULD I RETIRE? I'M SCARED

Barbara, a flight attendant, was offered an early retirement package, and deciding whether to accept paralyzed her. The offer was enticing, but leaving the job she'd held for so many years was terrifying. We worked together, and Barbara made her decision. She accepted the package and went back to school to learn new skills. She's happy and energized and has no regrets. ●

Each person and situation is unique, and I tailor my approach and tools accordingly. As a coach, I hold a trusting space for you to talk with me in a confidential setting. I listen to you. We brainstorm. We explore different perspectives.

I consider you the expert of your life. I hold a mirror up to show you what I see and hear. I work with you to get unstuck and moving again. I help you quiet down the inner critic voice we all have inside our heads and bring up the volume on your wise voice, the inner compass we all possess.

We sometimes work through not-so-happy feelings to get to the happy place. For example, fear is a very common feeling I work with, so we spend time exploring the fear the client is feeling, understanding it, getting new perspectives on it, and ultimately letting go of it.

I MADE QUICK DECISIONS I NOW REGRET

Sharon is 70 years old, living in a suburban townhome. After losing her husband six years ago, she sold her house in the city. The home sold quickly—in five days—and Sharon was rushed into finding a new home. A real estate agent showed her a suburban townhome, and Sharon fell in love with the retreat-like setting, purchased the home, and moved in.

That was five years ago. Until recently, Sharon had to fight off tears when she was asked: "How are you? How's the new home?"

In reality, Sharon felt trapped. The move to the suburbs took her away from the city's cultural events and liveliness and left her feeling isolated. There were no sidewalks for this former daily walker. Over time, Sharon became more and more bored, lonely, and cut off. She gained 20 pounds and despaired.

Of our first call, Sharon said to me: "I need to figure out my next chapter in life, and I want it to be a great one." We worked together as Sharon created a new plan to sell the townhouse and move to the East Coast, an area she knew well.

"I'm going to live a vagabond life," she said with glee, once we landed on this plan. Sharon plans to do short-term apartment rentals for a while on the East Coast and then may move on to California, free of houses, property taxes, possessions, and what were for her lonely and isolated suburban locations. She'll figure out next steps as she goes. Sharon's now energized and moving onto a new life that resonates with her. ●

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

Together, you and your coach will design your coaching partnership. Typically, in the first session, you'll get to know each other and discuss your goals. Ideally, you'd think about the appointment in advance and make note of what you want to discuss or accomplish through coaching.

A professionally trained coach will brainstorm your challenges with you, provide a safe and comfortable structure, along with the focus you need to stay in action, and hold you accountable between coaching sessions.

That accountability benefit is one aspect that makes coaching unique. A good life coach will hold you accountable for meeting your goals. Coaches' practices vary, but I typically work through bi-weekly phone calls or Skype sessions or face-to-face meetings lasting about 50 minutes. Our conversations are confidential. Before we end our conversation, I'll suggest homework. Don't cringe: The homework is always something you'll want to do.

HOW TO SELECT A COACH

The best way to find a great coach is to ask around. Life coaching can be a word-of-mouth business. If you know someone who's happy with their coaching experience, check out that coach. Talk to the coach, and trust your instincts. It's important to be comfortable with the person. Ask about how the coach works and what you can expect in a coaching engagement.

I'VE BEEN LAID OFF. I FEEL PARALYZED

Paul, a successful attorney specializing in the entertainment industry, called me on the recommendation of a colleague. Paul had been laid off. He was shocked, angry, and devastated. I helped Paul change his perspective on the situation, and over time Paul regained his confidence and landed a job in a firm with a culture that better suited him. He can now be the confident, talented lawyer he wants to be. ●

There are many coach training programs, but one I found reputable after research is the Coaches Training Institute, from which I'm certified. The 100 hours of face-to-face coach training were remarkably fun and life-changing for me. The certification program also requires trainees to complete 100 hours of paid coaching while being supervised by experienced coaches

and pass a written exam and an oral exam in which the trainee coaches master coaches as other master coaches listen, evaluate, and grade them.

You can also check out the "Find a Coach" service at the International Coach Federation website (coachfederation.org/find-a-coach). ICF is the governing body of the coach industry, and it offers a lot of

I HAVE A QUIRK THAT'S HOLDING ME BACK

Jack is a successful executive in a family-owned business. He's smart and capable, and yet people struggled when they had to interact with him. Jack tended to hold a conversation in his head while talking to people. His inner critic voice was very active and chatted with him during his communications with others, which led him to comment to, and criticize, himself. It was a strange and unhelpful cycle that left the other person not knowing what was going on. It was also derailing his career. In working with Jack, he gained awareness of this habit and stopped doing it. People have stopped avoiding him, and he's experiencing a more fulfilling work life. ●

helpful information about coaching on its website.

Some coaches use contracts. I don't. If you're not getting value from working with me, I don't want you stuck in a contract. Research indicates that it takes six months for a person to make significant change. I've worked with people for six months, and I have clients who've been with me for years. As long as you're continuing to get value and moving forward, we keep going.

Coaches vary on how they're compensated. If you research fees, you'll find they're all across the board, but in my experience, you should plan to spend \$175 and upwards per session for a good coach.

My final bit of wisdom: Be ready to invest in yourself. The outcomes are priceless. ■

MAUREEN GLASS is a Chicago-area coach who holds the CPCC, or Certified Professional Co-Active Coach®, designation. You can find her at maureenglass.com.