

Beauty NewsNYC.COM

health & fitness



From working out to keeping a healthy mental attitude, our health and fitness section has it all

AUGUST 2006

Life Coaching for Body, Mind and Soul

By *Leslie Rice Hart*



Lois Barth

These days more and more people are seeking guidance from a Life Coach. I was curious to learn what exactly a Life Coach does when Lisa, one of my personal training clients started working with Life Coach Lois Barth. Lisa works full-time, commutes into the city from New Jersey and is a mother of two, a 3 year old and an 18 month old. She needed help balancing her life, finding time for herself without guilt tagging along, and regaining her physical and mental health. Here are some questions I asked Lois.

LRH: How did you become a Life Coach?

LB: *I've always been fascinated with studying human development and personal growth. Why people do what they do, and how they can grow, change and evolve. My roots started in acting. I loved playing roles where characters were constantly moving through adversity, coming out the other end wiser and more fulfilled in their life. In acting, what allows a character to move to the next place is having an intention. Well, "reel" life is no different then "real" life.*

In order to have a life that one literally bounds out of bed in order to live, it is imperative that they have intentions, goals and support. Passion and life purpose is what keeps the momentum going.

LRH: What is the difference between Life Coaching and Therapy?

LB: This question is frequently asked and if you're not mindful of the differences, the two can overlap easily. Metaphorically speaking, if you look at your life as a garden, in most cases, with a therapist the focus is going to be on the rocks, the worms, and the seeds, (i.e., what's wrong? What's getting in the way?) in most modalities of therapy. The coach points out, "Yeah, I see the rocks, worms and weeds, and we know that all those will come up, but what about the flowers, plants and trees? What kind are you going to be putting in your garden? Where do you want to plant them...?"

As a colleague of mine clarifies, "Why?" is the question of therapy, where as "What?" is the question of coaching.

I always say, "It's not about what's wrong, but rather what's next?"

When a vision that really lights us up compels us, then the obstacles seem less daunting.

LRH: What is your training to Life Coach?

LB: Always believing that one needs to look at their life as a whole, I began my accreditation process at the Empowerment Institute with Gail Straub and David Gershon.

They do extensive training, preparing you to coach people on a 12-session curriculum that addresses every aspect of your life from emotions, work, career, etc. They are pioneers in personal and global transformation work. Using what I learned from the institute, my clients made amazing shifts and changes, and felt more fulfilled and peaceful.

LRH: What is the focus of your work?

LB: Relationships. The relationship with change and dreams of one's self such as personal/professional transition, romantic and interaction with co-workers.

Yet, no matter what the focus is, it's ultimately about connecting people with their values and life purpose, and supporting them in choices made that align with those values and life purpose. When you accomplish this, magic happens, because when people are clear about and live in accordance with their life purpose and values happiness is no longer this illusive thing.

LRH: How does one change their thinking and how do you help them do that?

LB: Get away from the "either/or" thinking versus both/and thinking

This distinction is vital towards living a rich and full life.

Either/or thinking is what I call see-saw thinking. You're either on the top or on the bottom. If you're up (which we all know how tenuous that can be), then you can plummet to the bottom in a second. It's very black and white. It does not take into account the shadings and nuances that make life rich and full.

Both/and thinking allows for the richness of life to intervene. It's expansive in nature and allows for growth, and change. It is one of the most productive frameworks of thinking to adapt.

For example, I'd like to lose weight, so I go on a diet. (notice "on" insinuates "off")

Either/or thinking: I was good (another word I find very limiting) and followed my diet, or I was bad (even more limiting) and broke my diet.

Both/and thinking: I'd like to lose weight, and I'm working on shifting my eating habits so I can let go of weight (right there, it's a process, not a destination)

I ate five meals, which are moving me towards my goals, and three meals that are not in line with my goals. There's a process, and there's something to work on.

Either/or leads to right/wrong and both/and leads to honoring the journey.

LRH: What would you consider one of the most important aspects of empowerment?

LB: *Distinction between responsibility and the "blame game." This is by far one of the most important aspects of empowerment, taking responsibility for one's actions, beliefs and behaviors and how one's life has turned out, up to this point. When one takes responsibility, there is so much power and so many choices available. Few people are willing to embrace this concept, because they so easily confuse it, with blame. They immediately go to blaming themselves. "I'm bad, I'm wrong. I created it", rather than, "Wow, I created this then I can create something else!!"*

Blame is very contractive, and leads to almost no promising options. Responsibility is full of choices and options.

This is something that shows up in my relationship coaching. I work with "singles in search of "soul mates". I find that when a relationship doesn't work out, people always seem to blame himself/ herself or the other person. It's human, it's just not very useful. I am always supporting my clients to look at personal responsibility. What did you learn from this relationship? What got clearer for you? What signs did you get that you chose to ignore? What beliefs attitudes and thoughts were you having when you attracted this person into your life? What qualities of this relationship would you like to bring into the next one and which ones would you like to leave behind?

Responsibility creates tremendous opportunity, options and learning. When you resist taking responsibility, chances are, it's because you have gotten into the "blame-game".

LRH: Will you give an example of specific goal and what steps you are taking to reach that goal?

LB: *One of the projects I'm working on as a coach is Fitness Magazine's, "Fitness Makeover" a year-long project where my "client" Lisa Renwick's goal (one of many) is to lose 20 pounds over the next year. She's half way through and she's already lost 15 pounds. As a coach, more than the food, I'm always asking her questions to get to what she's really "hungry" for? That's far more sustainable because when you satiate the deeper hungers, i.e. creative expression, to love, to be loved, to be loving towards yourself, to make a difference in the world, to be bold and speak your truth etc, then food is no longer the issue. You can occupy your time with more important questions than how much grilled chicken breast is allowed on my diet.*

LRH: Do you have any suggestions on how to change these habits?

LB: Watch how children evolve. Observe how they express their needs and use their creative imagination. The two best teachers on the planet are nature and children. Children fall into furniture, cry one second then laugh the next. They stumble and are curious about EVERYTHING. I am fascinated by how they teeter when they walk or they grab a finger if they feel they need it. When children fall we don't yell at them and say "Hey why aren't you walking yet?" We close the cabinets so they don't hurt themselves, or we put out a finger for support and they'll push it away if they don't need it. We hug and clap for each step they take. Let me ask you, "Why are we any different?" Any new behavior, goal and action are often accompanied by awkward movements and lack of experience. The more we can approach new situations with the compassion and care we approach a child learning to walk, the more we will thrive as a person, a community, a world.

We are imbued with this inextinguishable light. This light within us that may feel like it's on dimmers but it's there. All we need to do is put ourselves in the right company, thoughts and activity to "fan the flame", so to speak.

What allows you to lose total track of time not in a numbing way, but in an engaging way. By connecting with people places and things that "light you up," one can connect up with the "inextinguishable light that shines in all of us."

LRH: What other advice can you give when going for one's goals?

LB: Look the people you surround yourself with.

When I was looking for a life partner and I heard woman complaining that there are no good men, I'd RUN the other way. That was a conversation I had no interest in. I was out for a luscious life partnership, not 10,000 reasons why I couldn't have it. That didn't interest me.

Conversely, if I want to meet my life partner, I surround myself with people who are either in healthy relationships that I admire, or single people who are optimistic and proactively (not desperately) taking actions; whether it's to just show up even if they're scared, or just appreciate their life as a single person. I am always telling my clients, "Be very intentional about who you surround yourself with. They are a mirror of your own thoughts, beliefs and behaviors."

On that subject, if you want to feel healthy, you don't eat a diet of junk food, and if you want to create a healthy attitude towards life, you don't fill your mind with junky thoughts, behaviors and actions. What's next for you? What will get you there? What ways of eating, thinking, sleeping, socializing supports that? Which ones undermine them? It's not about wrong, it's just about those attitudes actions and behaviors not getting you where you want to go.

Since I'm not a fan of the words right/wrong, good/bad, I create criteria in other ways. One model I came up with low frequency/high frequency. Is an action, belief, or attitude a "low frequency" or "high frequency". Does it create movement or inertia. Does it serve to "light you up" or deaden you. It changes in the moment. So if we can get out of the right/wrong and move into "Does this promote vitality or numbness, move me in the direction of my dreams, etc?" It becomes a lot easier to make the choices on our own behalf. Will we do it perfectly or all the time? Probably not. Is that ok? Yes!

You can contact Lois Barth at 212-682-5225 or <http://us.f316.mail.yahoo.com/y/Compose?To=Lois@1Dreamatime.com>

Visit her website at: www.1dreamatime.com