

finding a balance



LIFE COACHES CAN HELP MOMS NICHE OUT TIME & MAXIMIZE THEIR POTENTIAL

BY

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When Darlene Calcagno meets new people at social events, she never asks them what they do: “I always ask, ‘What do you do for fun?’”

She often finds their answers don't come easily. When the question includes those two tiny words - for fun - many people aren't sure what to say, Calcagno said. They're lives are so full of work or taking care of their children that they often don't have time or energy for their other interests.

Calcagno knows what it's like to be in that position. With a 14-year-old son to care for and a full-time business to run, the single mom doesn't find it easy to keep an even balance between work and her personal life. A few years ago, she turned to a life coach for help, and the success she had as a result kept her going back periodically since then.

“Anne [Jolles] helps me think of some things that will energize me,” said Calcagno, a personal chef who runs Cuisine by Darlene in Hanover. “And then she helps me think of how we can get more of that into my life. It's all about having your

whole life in balance - work, family, relationship, home, relationships with friends. It's sort of a global look at your life.”

Returning to her life coach, now and then, has made a difference in aspects of Calcagno's life both personally and professionally.

During a recent campaign to increase her business clients, she recently signed on for three months of Jolles' coaching.

“It helps me stay on track,” she said. “I'm making progress on doing something when before I was just thinking about it.”

Getting Unstuck

Professional life coaches help their clients maximize their potential using the skills, resources, and creativity they already have.

“We look at what works in their life and help them make that grow,” said Jolles, a Hanover resident, who operates Coaching Connections with her colleague Tracy Mindess, of Boxford.

Jolles and Mindess initially spend two to three hours with a client to talk in depth and figure out what makes the person feels most alive.

Subsequent sessions are usually 30 minutes.

“In that half hour, you are our focus. It's luxurious to feel that we're only focusing on your needs and strengths,” Jolles said.

Often clients come to them because they feel stuck in some aspect of their life and are unsure of their next step. Issues can relate to relationships, work, career, health, parenthood or any other aspect of life, she added.

Many Coaching Connections' clients give voice to concerns like these:

“In parenting, lines get blurred between you and your children. You feel their pain; you feel their joy,” Mindess said. “One of the things we help parents do is reclaim their identity. Their identity gets swallowed up.”

Mindess said every parent comes with different issues to explore, but certain advice she finds herself offering again and again: Set boundaries; know what's important to you; and make time for yourself.

Yet, life coaching doesn't offer a magic formula for balancing the lives of busy parents.

“It's a dynamic process, unique to each individual,” Jolles said. “It takes conscious effort and conscious thought to make choices to balance your life. Life balance means, if you pick something up, you're going to have to put something else down to stay balanced.”

Voluntary Accountability

Every day, Randi Bussin counsels people who are struggling with work-related issues. Some are out of work, some are making career changes, and some hate their jobs. Many are stressed, and Bussin tends to absorb their negative energy.

“Having a life coach helps me figure out what is important to me,” said Bussin, a single Belmont mom with an 8-year-old daughter. “It helps me set boundaries - and set boundaries without feeling guilty about it. If I'm not taking care of myself, how can I take care of my daughter and my clients? I need to be healthy all the time, because it's a particularly

draining field.”

Bussin has worked with life coach Sharon Teitelbaum several times over the last few years, and now she's in the midst of a three-month program focusing on work-life balance. In addition to her usual job and family responsibilities, she is taking training and professional licensure courses in her field. With Teitelbaum as part of her support system, she hopes to be able to balance those courses with her needs for exercise and self-care. Her desire to set appropriate boundaries with her clients and with her daughter is ongoing.

“If you don't commit to a chunk of time, things don't happen,” she said. Bussin says that Teitelbaum has worked with so many high-achieving women that she “knows the tricks.” And that expertise is worth a lot in her book.

“I'm spending money to see Sharon, and you can bet that I'm taking actions steps in between our sessions,” Bussin said. “Coaching is all about taking action and getting people to move. It does hold you accountable.”

Is this **all there is?**
I feel really stuck.
 Why I can't **get out**
of my own way?
 What **else is**
out there for me?
 Something is **calling**
to me.
There's something
 I need to **change here.**

Parents who work with Teitelbaum often feel depleted and exhausted.

“They're putting their job, their children, their marriage and their home ahead of their own needs, and they get used up,” Teitelbaum said. Comparing the long process of parenting to a marathon, she said, “They need nourishment and hydration for the long haul so they can be present in a healthy way for their families. People typically give

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