

# THE FAMILY LINK

Published the third issue of every month



## IDECLUTTER FROM THE HEART

### Getting (Life) Fit



By Ellen Smith

I am very grateful and satisfied in my career as a professional organizer. For some organizers, though, there are times they want to make a change. She or he may wish to continue with a career that helps people, yet take their organizer skill set to a higher level. Some of the organizers I know have upped their game and become a certified life coach, someone who helps people identify and achieve personal and professional goals through developing skills and appropriate attitudes. I was interested in gaining an understanding of what a life coach does, how she/he differs from a therapist, and if I should recommend a client to see a life coach.

I sought out Debra Levy, a certified life coach and productivity specialist and owner of A Life That Fits, LLC, to help familiarize me with what a life coach does. Having successfully managed a number of transitions in her own life, Debra understands how difficult change can be. She has a degree in interior design and, like me, is a professional organizer and a member of NAPO, the National Association of Productivity and Professional Organizers. More recently she has taken a rigorous course of study to become a life coach.

Debra began her "journey" in 2013 when she considered shifting careers. She heard about "Coach Approach Training" and was intrigued that it incorporated her love of psychology with working one-on-one with people. "It taught me how to listen and not be the expert." Her initial training took two and a half years. She went further and became accredited by the ICF (International Coaching Feder-

ation), the premier professional coaching association. Always looking to learn and grow in order to help her clients, Debra is currently going for a higher credential, the PCC, professional certified coach.

Debra said the premise of The Coach Approach program is to ask powerful questions as well as mirror and summarize the clients' words back to them. "When the client is able to have a voice and the words come from them, they believe it, rather than just going along with what the expert they hired says. It has more impact and power." In one case, Debra said she repeated verbatim the client's words back to her. The client paused in consideration and said, "Now that you put it that way, I can see that," not immediately recognizing those were her own words.

I enjoyed a very informative question and answer session with Debra.

**Q. From your perspective, what is the difference between a life coach and a therapist?**

A. Therapy is about looking into both past and present, to uncover and resolve issues from something that happened to cause a person to be stuck. Coaching guides a person to look at their strengths, their modalities—how they take in and process information and their values and needs. Then the coach examines where the person is now and where she/he wants to be. Finally, the coach and client collaborate to form a bridge between the two. Together they establish new ways of thinking which lead to new positive behaviors. Change happens by creating space for insights.

**Q. Since most coaching is done over the phone or via a tool like Zoom, how important is the chemistry between a coach and a client?**

A. Chemistry is extremely important. Take time to select a coach that inspires trust. The coach is the client's thinking partner. A coach must be nonjudgmental, ethical and approachable. Together the two create priorities and set goals.

**Q. How likely is a coach to give advice?**

A. Not likely. That would be consulting. I tell my clients I may wear a few hats. If I feel a client wants my advice, I may ask if

I should put on my consulting hat. Otherwise, I may offer suggestions that have worked for other clients and encourage the client to choose.

**Q. What issues do people who work with you wish to address?**

A. Many people wish to deal with goal-setting; time management; setting boundaries (e.g. not being able to say no to others); self-care; handling their own sabotaging self-talk by changing their behaviors; discovering their potential; improving communications with loved ones; and friends; as well as making decisions in order to move forward.

**Q. How long do you tell prospective clients it will take for them to see positive results?**

A. I tell my clients to expect results in a minimum of 12 weekly sessions, which last between 45-60 minutes. During the sessions, I work together with my client to help create awareness, find their strengths, and work on reaching their goals. We then

work on an action plan for the week between sessions so that they can move forward in reaching those goals. Accountability is a big factor in creating motivation and achieving success.

**Q. When might I, a professional organizer, recommend a client see a life coach?**

A. A life coach can be a valuable partner for someone who feels "stuck." Sometimes it has to do with a limited perspective of their own situation and they need an objective, nonjudgmental coach to help them sort things through. Other times they may not be clear about how to break down bigger goals into doable steps or may have a limited view of their own potential, based upon others' views of them or their own self-talk. A qualified life coach can help them overcome what may be stopping them and help them achieve a more fulfilling, productive life.

**Q. Your business name, A Life That Fits, LLC, is so on-target. How did it come about?**

A. So many times people feel the need to fit themselves into the new trends, the new strategies, the new things that come up. I call my company A Life that Fits because I uncover their strengths which they embrace, preventing them from forcing their proverbial square peg into a round hole. I seek to guide them to a place where their life works for them, they enjoy what they are doing and feel successful.

**Q. What do you most love about coaching?**

A. I love when my clients make these connections during our sessions and feel empowered and incorporate new perspectives into their life. It changes everything! It seeps into other areas of their lives. They feel motivated to get things done that they

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