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Good coaches inspire, collaborate

Focus is on issues, moving forward, realizing potential

But untrained coaches abound in unregulated field

JUDY STEED

'Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.'

Carl Jung

For the last seven weeks, our Get a Life! participants — seven in all, including one couple and five individuals ranging in age from 19 to 49 — have been working with coaches, provided by the *Star*, to declutter, delegate domestic duties, set limits with unruly offspring, make a career change, become more assertive and connect with people.

You've watched them focus and figure out how to move forward — as their coaches helped them develop strategies to get a life. And many of you have asked: How do you find a good life coach?

Good question. Coaching is an emerging field, it is not regulated by a government body, and untrained people abound. Anyone can hang out a shingle. So, what to look for should you decide to get a little help from the sidelines?

"We're dealing with people's lives," says Eileen Chadnick, proprietor of Big Cheese Coaching (bigcheese-coaching.com), emphasizing the importance of checking "the four E's of professional designation — education, experience, exams and ethics."

Ask questions. Where was the coach trained? What sort of background does he/she have? This is a field that tends to attract mature adults on their second or third career. Have they joined the profession's main self-regulatory body, the International Coach Federation (ICF)?

A graduate of Toronto's Adler School of Professional Coaching, Chadnick is an Adler Certified Professional Coach (ACPC) — a designation that requires a minimum of 100 hours of coaching, a five-hour exam and live coaching of a faculty member (under observation). When she completes 250 hours of coaching, she'll get the letters ACC, Associate Certified Coach, after her name.

It's Chadnick who quotes Jung (above) on her website. Coaching, she says, "is not just about the doing, it's about *being*. It's about what you learn and who you become in the process. That's transformation."

The Adler School's top level is Master Certified Coach (MCC), of which there are only eight in Canada. Dorothy Greenaway is one. "MCC means you've had 200 hours of training and you've done 2,500 hours of paid coaching," Greenaway explains. Program director at the Adler School, Greenaway has been coaching since 1998; she teaches at the Adler School, the only coaching institution located in

Ontario.

Worldwide, there are 30 coaching organizations, most in the U.S., three in Canada. Among the most reputable are Coaches Training Institute (thecoaches.com), which regularly comes to Toronto to hold live workshops and training sessions; CoachVille (cvcommunity.com) and CoachU (coachinc.com). All U.S.-based, they offer distance education on-line, with a wide variety of programs. And they are all recognized by International Coach Federation, which sets the bar on issues of training, ethics and standards.

The ICF philosophy of coaching is collaborative. An ICF coach is taught to approach clients as resourceful people who are capable of coming up with their own solutions. "Coaching concentrates on where individuals are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future," states the ICF website. "ICF member coaches recognize that results are a matter of the individual's or team's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of coaching skills, approaches and methods."

For Greenaway, coaching begins with listening. Recently, she was interviewed by a senior executive who was on the prowl for a little backroom guidance. "She spoke to a number of coaches as she was doing her research and chose me. I asked why. She said I listened to her."

Experienced coaches like Greenaway tend to specialize. She doesn't do much career coaching — as in helping people figure out what they want to do for a living. "I like working with high potential leaders and managers who want to enhance their skills and make a shift in how they're living their lives." For example: one client is a successful corporate boss who is more uncertain in his private life. His first marriage foundered on the shoals of his dedication to "the job." He chose to get coaching "because he doesn't want this (second) marriage to go down," Greenaway says. "He recognizes that he's not very communicative, not very responsive, and he wants to change. When we talk, we don't dwell on the past — I treat it as a source of data. I ask questions: 'What about the past can inform your future? What did you learn from your previous marriage?' As a coach, I'm objective; we're trained to not judge behaviour, to be curious about what's behind the behaviour."

About 60 per cent of Greenaway's clients are funded by their corporations, the rest out of their own pockets. Like most coaches, she suggests that clients commit to a three-month minimum time period with three sessions a month, "to build the momentum for change, to shift old habits and acquire new skills."

It is not unusual for coaches to be coached. Greenaway hired herself a coach "to hold me accountable on weight loss issues," she says. "The process was very successful. Now I've moved on and I work out with a personal trainer, Jeff Dube, who is also an Adler-trained coach." For Greenaway, coaching is about lifelong learning. "I think of it as a journey to mastery," a journey that never ends. "You engage a coach based on where you are at that point in your life and what you want to accomplish." Currently, she's working with her own life coach on "how I look at the world."

Another basic function of a coach, she says with a laugh, "is (to give) a kick in the butt."

As a professional, Greenaway has her limits: "If you're a corporate leader who wants to be more effective in the workplace, I'll help you. But if you're retaining me to help you figure out how to be a better dictator, sorry, the answer is no."

One of the challenges is dealing with individuals or organizations seeking to become something they

cannot be, "like a shy, withdrawn person wanting to be like Bill Clinton," says Sheeba Varghese-Denys, an ICF certified coach (forwardfocus.ca). "It's not likely to happen." Then there are coaches who raise people's expectations "to a level that's not realistic or helpful, and then the clients walk away frustrated."

That's why she's pleased with the effectiveness of a new assessment tool that "helps define `who you are.' It's called OMS, Organizational Management System." Her company, Forward Focus, has licensed OMS for Eastern Canada and offers it to clients. "It's a powerful tool for both the client and the coach, to help clients get clear about who they are." The key to coaching is about being realistic, she says. "There's no point trying to make you into somebody you're not."

And yet there's a push in the profession for great achievement.

Choice: The Magazine of Professional Coaching, edited by Get A Life! coach Maureen Ford, quotes Lance Secretan. "Leaders are coaches," he writes in *Inspire! What Great Leaders Do*. "Great coaches inspire. A coach develops an ongoing partnership that inspires others towards improved performance and greater quality and fulfillment in their personal and professional lives. All great athletes have coaches — they wouldn't be great without them — and greatness in life is no different."

Then there's the "coaching approach" used by such corporate managers as Bob Hughes of British Telecom's BT Computing Partners. The goal is to foster leadership "wherever people are in the organization."