

Create the Life You Want

The Best Advice Money Can Buy—for Free

By Glenn Plaskin

Every athlete who dreams of attaining optimum performance knows that working with an experienced coach is essential. Take that idea a step further and you might consider a “life coach”—your very own mentor who rallies your energy and guides you to tip-top health and fitness, financial well-being, happiness and a more satisfying lifestyle.

It's a growing trend that began in the corporate world. In the United States there are now more than 10,000 life coaches who assist people in creating major breakthroughs in their lives.

Quicker than psychotherapy, more fun than going it alone, life coaching is action- and solution-oriented. It encourages clients to confront fears and negative self-talk, to think “outside the box,” and to shed habits that aren't working. A life coach typically meets with you by telephone three to four times a month, in 30- to 45-minute sessions. One favorite coaching slogan, “Do, dump or delegate,” teaches clients that tasks can either be dealt with, eliminated, assigned or hired out, leaving more time to develop talents and a spiritual life. Monthly fees range from \$250 to \$600, but you can also find free coach support groups, both online and in person. FAMILY CIRCLE talked to three of the nation's prominent life coaches. Here they share their life-enhancing strategies.

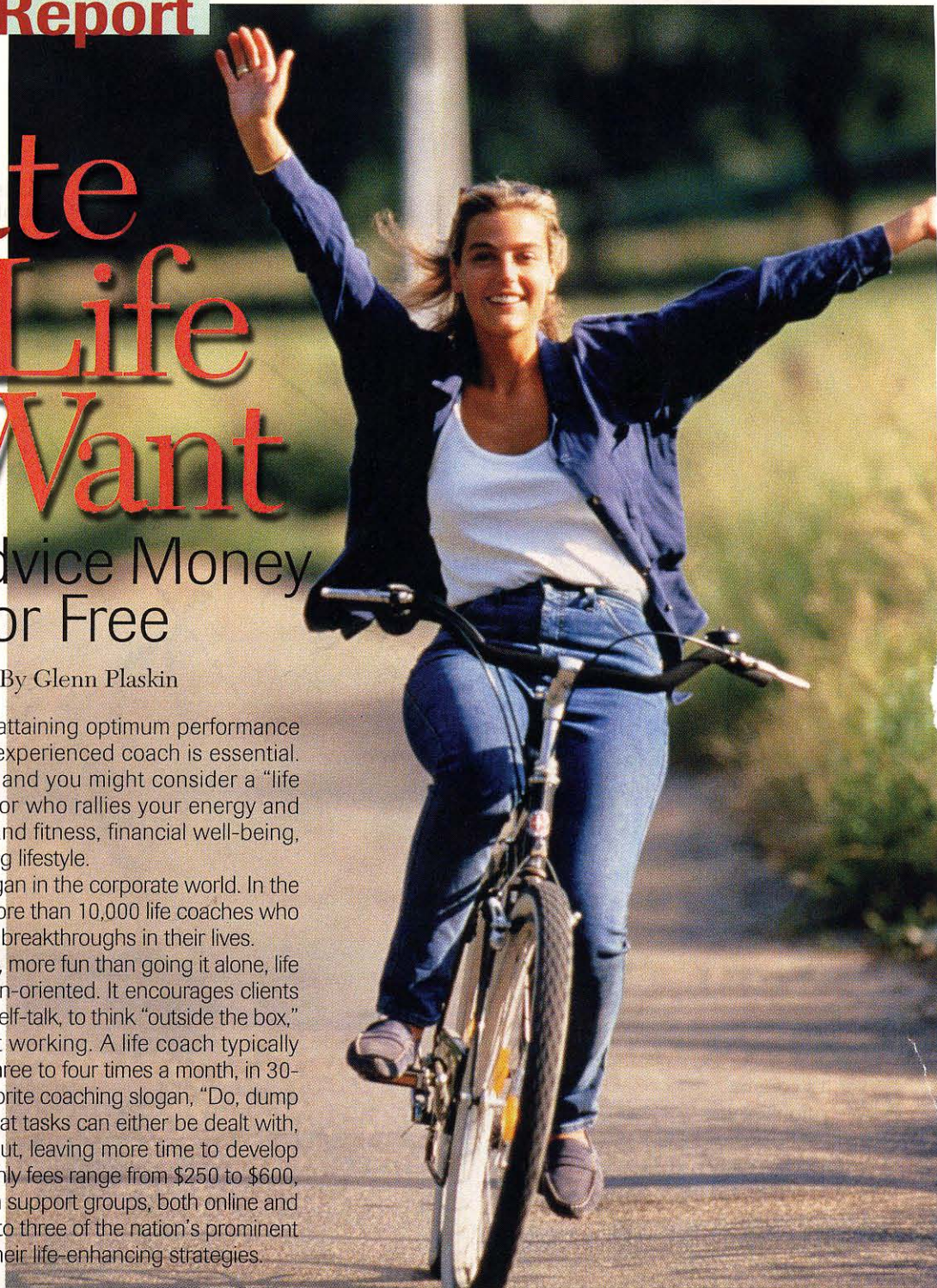
Find More Happiness in a Hectic Life

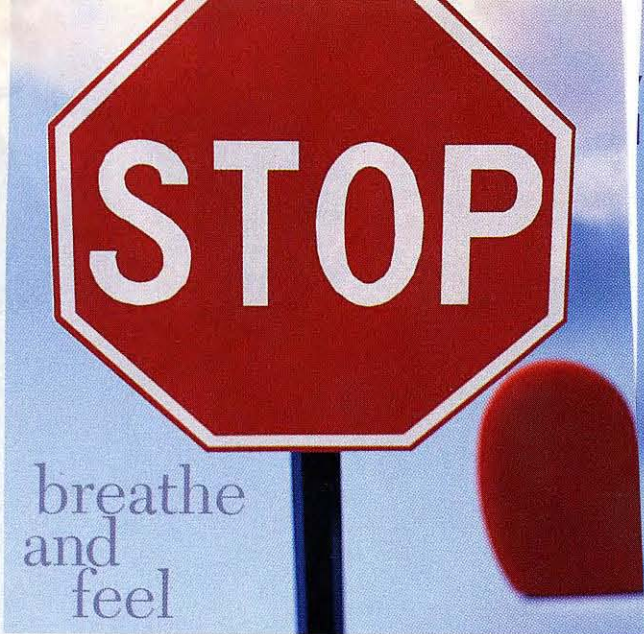
Long before life coach Cheryl Richardson wrote her first best-seller, *Take Time for Your Life* (Broadway Books), and became the life-makeover expert on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, the former tax consultant says she struggled. “I've been

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there, believe me! I worked with a coach to remove clutter from my life, take better care of my health and streamline my work habits.” Richardson believes anyone can get “unstuck” by developing “courage muscles” and by following the strategies in her subsequent books—*Life Makeovers* (Broadway Books) and *Stand Up for Your Life* (Free Press).

Asked what advice she'd give if you were overworked, uninspired by your job, stressed by household chores and family caretaking, and afraid you'd never realize your





Making changes requires developing 'courage muscles.'

If you feel guilty, you know you're on the right track.

"Third, make a list of the top ten things that drain your energy. Perhaps it's a friend whose chronic complaining exhausts you. You'll need to practice 'graceful truth-telling': 'Doris, our friendship is important to me, but there are times when I want to avoid you. But I will support you 150 percent in dealing with your boss.' Don't defend your boundary-setting. Simply back it up with action.

"Other things that might be cluttering up your life include unreturned phone calls, an unresolved conflict with a family member (make that dreaded phone call and apologize—or forgive), a mess in the living room. Can you feel the amount of mental energy being sucked up by these kinds of drains? A coach will encourage you to just *do it*, either by completing the tasks yourself, finding someone to help you or throwing things out. Once you've uncluttered your home, find ways to make it soul-nurturing—with artwork, plants, scents, music. Making these changes requires developing 'courage muscles.' We can do this by facing our fears—try facing one a day—then taking risks.

"For those who can't afford a private coach, I set up a network of free life makeover groups. Go to www.cherylrichardson.com, click on the life-makeover groups, type in your location, and you'll find a group. It's not therapy or a gripe session. You talk about what's working in your life, what's not, and how to support each other. When you're feeling stuck, you can brainstorm with your peers.

"Once you have twenty-five ideas about how to move forward, you pick the five that seem most reasonable to you. You set yourself up for success by taking incremental steps. Your life-makeover group is like a Jell-O mold—you may feel wobbly, but the group will support you."

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potential, Richardson said: "The first thing I'd do is offer reassurance that your life really can change. I'd suggest you take a deep breath, relax and realize that you have what it takes to reclaim your sanity. There's no quick fix—this will be a one- to three-year process—but relief comes immediately. Give me one session and you'll feel better.

"The first thing you need to do is step back and honestly assess all areas of your life—what's working and what isn't. When someone's unhappy, she often looks at what needs to be added: 'If I only had a bigger home, a more exciting job, then everything would be great!' I believe a quality life has more to do with what you remove from it. You might find that you have to give up a volunteer activity, tell your boss you can't take on that fourth project or insist that your husband and kids help with the chores.

"Second, you need to pay attention to how often you do things you'd rather not. Before you say yes, stop, breathe and feel. This short exercise will help you to know what you want to do. Don't be afraid to rock the boat.

8 Steps to a More Healthful Life

"When it comes to diet and exercise, deprivation, crash programs and a cookie-cutter approach don't work," notes health and fitness motivation coach Susan Cantwell (www.lifestylecoachinstitute.com). "What you eat and how you tone up has to be customized for you. We start by analyzing your day to find pockets of time for exercise, and I suggest ways to avoid poor eating habits. Coaching is about finding a strategy that changes your lifestyle permanently."

1. Pick an activity you truly enjoy: Exercise isn't meant to

be torture. List activities you enjoyed as a child—biking, roller-skating, jumping rope, skiing. Or try something new like ballroom or belly dancing.

2. Identify barriers, obstacles and excuses. First, write a list of barriers—unchangeable circumstances such as working 9 to 5 or having three children to care for. These you must work around. Next, list obstacles, foreseeable circumstances that impede your plans, such as lack of a baby-sitter or the convenience of junk food.

Obstacles can be overcome by brainstorming, delegating or

setting boundaries. Finally, list your excuses; these are smoke screens that allow you to continue old habits.

3. Develop a plan. Write down your meals for a week, keep healthy snacks in the house and remove temptations such as chips and cookies.

4. Keep a food log. Write down everything you take in, including alcohol and water. This builds awareness.

5. Develop a support structure. Don't start without involving family and friends.

6. Allot time. If you're nurturing others, working full-time

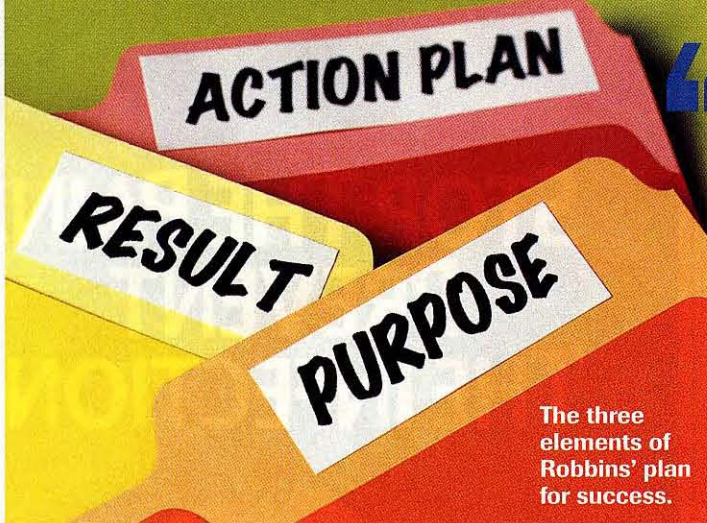
and running a household, you may feel too busy, but choose a time and make a date with yourself. Short of an emergency, don't cancel.

7. Clean your slate. Before starting an exercise or eating program, complete projects that are weighing you down.

8. Allow yourself to be human. If you have an all-or-nothing attitude, get rid of it. On a day when you veer off course, treat yourself as you'd treat a friend, gently and with encouragement.

Never beat yourself up; just return to the plan.

Susan Byrnes



“Everything you’re looking for you already have inside you.”

to your future and having flashes of moments to come.’ People need a compelling image that’s pulling them forward. When you lose faith in your future, you become depressed. Most people try to *push* themselves to do something, rather than feeling drawn to it. I ask people to envision magical moments to come in their lives. True wealth is a sense of abundance.

“Step three is to become physically strong. Working out is the fastest way to boost strength and fuel determination. How you move determines how you feel, so start doing aerobics and lifting weights, releasing endorphins and jolting your nervous system. We do physical exercises daily—a minimum of 15 minutes to fulfillment, 30 minutes to thrive—and also emotional ones. To start, think about everything in your life you can be grateful for, then do five to ten minutes of incantations, passionately positive statements repeated aloud with such intensity that you feel them in your body. ‘All I need is within me right now, thank you God!’ You’re building a positive daily habit that puts you in the right frame of mind to approach financial goals.

“Now we’re ready to create an RPM Plan—Results-focused, Purpose-driven, Massive-action. Any successful person can answer these three questions: 1. What *exactly* do I want? 2. What’s my purpose? 3. What’s my game plan? Be specific when describing what you want. Clarity is power. You state your purpose because if you know the *why*, you can then figure out the *how*. To construct a game plan, reveal your dream to family and friends and ask for ideas about how to realize it. Or find a role model, someone who’s outstanding, and ask her to share her strategies.

“I also have people figure out how much money it would take for them to feel financially secure and protected. Most people don’t even have three to six months’ cash on hand to cover basic necessities. I encourage them to accumulate enough liquid assets to cover basic living expenses for two months minimum; to buy disability insurance; to begin a private pension fund; to find ways to spend less than they earn; to start saving ten percent of their income, and to create a spending and investment plan. I teach people that one key to wealth is becoming more valuable—devising ways to add real value to people’s lives. Finally, you have to enjoy wealth. It’s not an end in itself, only a means. Share it with people you care about. Make a commitment to give away a portion of what you earn. I’ve never known anyone who did this for five years who didn’t become financially abundant.

“To do all this is not difficult. Your biggest obstacle is fear—fear that you’re not enough. I show people there are emotions they value more than fear—determination, drive, certainty, faith. These feelings allow you to take bold steps forward in your life, even as you acknowledge your fear. You can do it.” (To find a coach or attend a seminar, visit anthonyrobbins.com or call 888-834-9096.)

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Turn Debt Frets into Financial Abundance

Anthony Robbins, the peak performance master who pioneered life coaching, says he was once “financially broke and emotionally bankrupt,” reduced to washing dishes in his bathtub. “I’d hit rock bottom,” says the 43-year-old, who grew up with little money, left home at 17 and discovered a brilliant talent for salesmanship before crashing into depression at the age of 21. “I’m thankful for that pain because it gave me the push I needed to change,” he says. Tapping into his own *Unlimited Power* (Fireside), the title of his first best-seller, Robbins immersed himself in the teachings of philosophers and inspirational leaders and soon began giving self-help seminars himself. Finally, he was able to *Awaken the Giant Within* (Fireside), take some *Giant Steps* (Fireside), and the rest is history. Nowadays, Robbins galvanizes audiences of up to 20,000 at a time to become emotionally, physically and spiritually fit.

How would he coach you if you were drowning in debt, worried about a shrinking 401K and stressed by a dead-end job that doesn’t pay enough?

“When you think about things that way, you’re being overwhelmed by negative emotions. It’s impossible to see a way out of your situation when you look through such a negative filter. So the first thing I’d do is lead you through an exercise that floods you with powerfully positive emotions. We reset your emotions from fear, worry, sadness and self-pity, to faith, courage, determination, love and passion. These are the emotions that *move* people.

“First, I’d say: ‘I want you to envision how you’d feel if you were economically free, had the ultimate relationship, were in peak physical condition and had a fulfilling career.’ You’d feel love, pride, security and connection. So: Everything you’re looking for you already have inside you. Next, close your eyes and reach out with your hand—first slowly, then faster—and bring into your body memories of experiences that gave you joy—your first kiss, the birth of a child, a spiritual moment. We’re reactivating the part of your nervous system that has experienced happiness.

“Second, I’d say: ‘If God was giving you a picture of your future destiny, what would it be? Imagine stepping in-