



Susan Edwards

## Life Line

### **Life is a journey – why not hire a guide?**

Feeling overwhelmed with what's going on in your life can be par for the course.

But there is someone who can help you find balance or fulfillment after all: a life coach.

Think of them as personal trainers for living. But instead of muscle definition, a life coach helps you hit your definition of success.

People are drawn to life coaching, in essence, to make that impossible dream a reality.

"Usually people are looking at personal goals related to a few areas: health, family, career," explains Susan Edwards, a certified personal coach in Oakville. "We've made some interesting changes as a society, in terms of when we choose to have children."

For others, they may have left a successful corporate life to embark on their own business venture.

"It can be difficult to adjust to the new roles owning a business," says Edwards. "A coach helps ensure they keep up with that momentum and accountability."

Edwards herself is no stranger to the coach approach – she employs her own Master Certified Coach for her personal development.

"I model the adage that 'we are all a work in progress,'" states Edwards. "My coaching is impacted by the life lessons as a parent and my partnership with my husband."

The first session is typically complementary – it's a chance to take coaching for a test drive.

"I want to ensure that I will be the best person to be working with the individual," explains Edwards.

Compatibility is important and her desire is to "feel

**By Rebecca Dumais**

photography by Liesa Kortmann



that I'm going to be able to contribute in a way that has a lot of impact for them."

Elizabeth Wong, a client of Edwards, admits to seeing results right away. "In a matter of weeks, my coach helped me to define some issues and guided me on a path of discovery that no one could," she explains. "Before I began working with my coach, I was frustrated with some of the challenges in my life. I was struggling to balance the needs of my family, my community and my self," she adds.

But don't confuse coaching with therapy. Typically, people contact a therapist to eliminate emotional pain.

But "most often people who seek coaching are very successful already, and they want to be even more so. It's about where they are now and visualizing a goal and how to bridge that gap," Edwards explains.

She asks for a minimum three-month commitment for the client to make any significant change. Three to six months is common. But "If at two years, unless there has been a lot of significant changes for that person in that time frame, it's probably not

serving its purpose," she says.

In each coaching call or meeting, action steps and commitments are agreed upon for the next meeting.

Each time, the coach asks what was accomplished, what wasn't, and what barriers, if any, the client encountered along the way.

"It has a lot of momentum to it," says Edwards.

Wong's transformation began the first time she worked with Edwards.

"I sensed immediately that she was helping me in a unique and exciting way. She empowered me by affirming my strengths and acknowledging my efforts," explains Wong. "She helped me to better define my needs and create realistic short-term goals, all in the context of the big picture of my life.

"My coach has brought a wealth of professional resources and experience to the process. She clearly sees how people function within their environment and how to gently bring their strengths and needs together," she adds.

Edwards makes herself available in her office, or even a coffee shop, by phone and

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e-mail. She feels that through phone coaching, clients are able to listen to themselves more effectively.

“In a coaching conversation, it’s about giving the time to you as the coachee,” she explains. E-mail coaching enables the client to share quick thoughts with the coach between sessions.

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Coaches typically work on a monthly retainer basis – expect to pay a certified coach around \$200–\$400 per month, which buys a specified number of formal coaching sessions. It is important to find out if the fee includes provisions such as unlimited e-mail feedback or contacting the coach about something critical between formal sessions.

Interview several coaches before settling on one. Referrals from friends or colleagues are the best references, or look to organizations such as the International Coach Federation or (for corporate coaching) Corporate Coach U.

A Professional Certified Coach will have about 750 hours of experience, whereas a Master Certified Coach would have 2,500 hours under their belt.

“The best way I can explain what coaching has meant to me, is that I’ve experienced an efficient and satisfying transformation in my life,” says Wong. “I don’t feel alone in my journey. I’m leading the way, but I know that I can turn to my trusty navigator, my coach, if I need her.” 🍷

See source directory, page 113