

New Year

The coming of a new year is a great opportunity to make positive changes in your life.

BY SARAH POPE

New You

The new year offers hope and a clean slate. And what will you be saying to yourself when the clock ticks over the midnight hour? The same thing everyone says I bet; "This year is going to be my year!" Now you just have to find a way to make that happen, and stick to your goals.

The problem is that many good intentions die hard. Soon and all the great things you had planned for the New Year are washed away with your somewhat diminished memories of the night before. Even if you manage to remember your resolutions, it can be difficult to know how to get there.

So myself and Oxygen Editor-in-Chief Iolande are going to share our little secret of success with you; life coaching. Seeing a qualified Life Coach is a great way to ensure that you reach your destination, wherever that may be.

MY EXPERIENCE

When the email first arrived in my Inbox offering 12 weeks of life coaching I jumped at the chance to get on board. To be honest, I was in a rut and couldn't quite figure out why; I had a great job and was in a loving, rewarding relationship. Friends? Family? It all seemed fine. But somehow I felt like life wasn't what it should be. I felt stressed, unfulfilled and, well, kind of boring.

On my way to my first life-coaching session my excitement started to build. Jennifer and I had arranged earlier that we would meet every Monday after work at a local café until my twelve weeks were up. Just making the choice to begin life coaching was enough to make me feel empowered and proactive. At the same time, I had no idea what to expect from my first meeting. All I knew about life coaching I had seen on a US documentary that featured a guy whose split personality could read the future... and help you reach your goals.

To my relief, Jennifer was neither schizophrenic nor psychic, and immediately put me at ease with her friendly demeanour and good sense of

humour. Soon I felt like I was having coffee with a girlfriend and was raring to get started.

THE FIRST SESSION

This is a time to take stock. It's time to spill the beans on the many aspects of our life which seem to define us; family, friends, relationship, fun, health and fitness, career, financial situation and spiritual life. I found myself easily opening up to Jen when it came to all these things, and afterwards when she read her notes back to me, I found myself utterly fascinated at my off-the-cuff life synopsis. You'd be surprised what comes out.

"I can definitely see a few goals emerging out of here," I recall Jen saying. And after she read back everything I started to realise that she was right. My life had very little balance to it. I loved my job, but too many nights skipping the gym in lieu of getting in a few extra hours work was taking its toll. Whilst I thought this was conducive to career success, in actuality it was giving me no time to recharge and do my best in the office. I needed to start investing some time in myself.

DREAM BIG

Imagine a miracle takes place in the middle of the night and tomorrow your life is exactly the way you want it to be. What

does it look like?

This is my first task in my twelve week program. "Dream big!" Jen's voice sounds in my head as I sit in front of my blank page of paper trying to extract my most wild and impossible desires. I begin to scribble down every detail of my perfect dream life, trying to widdle down all the ideas in my head; 'I'm social and outgoing, I'm healthy and exercise regularly, I sing again, I am organised,' I write, along with a thousand other things. At the end, as I stare back at all the things I've written down, I feel a wave of apprehension roll over me – now that I've admitted what I really want, I'm actually going to have to do this.

As I read my list out to Jen I start to feel sheepish; feeling slightly embarrassed at my starry-eyed optimism. When I finish, Jen looks me in the eye and tells me that I can have everything that I wrote down on that page, and more. "It is easier to get tasks done, both big and small, with a life coach because having a coach keeps you focused on what it is you want to achieve and keeps you accountable," she explains. "This gives you momentum, which is crucial when you are making changes in your life."

After Jen and I had extracted four main goals from my 'Dream Big' exercise, she asked me if the thought of achieving my goals scares me. In fact, it did. There was something about trying to get the things I



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really wanted that made me feel exposed and vulnerable. Jen tells me that I am not alone in this feeling. “People are scared to make positive changes in their life because the feeling of fear keeps them “stuck” in their current situation,” she says. “Even if the situation is unpleasant, it is familiar. The feeling of certainty, which gives us all a sense of security, prevents us from making changes, because we are then going into uncharted waters and fear starts creeping in.”

MAPPING IT OUT

This is what so few of us forget to do when we are faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge. Luckily I had Jen, who helped me establish small tasks every week. As we went through my goals one by one, we would decide the best course of action for the week. If my goal was to exercise more, we would discuss things such as what activities I could do, when, where and with whom. Though this seems a simple enough job, talking through the details in our sessions helped clear up any doubt and indecision I had been harbouring. After I parted with Jen for the week, it was a simple matter of sticking to the plan.

Suddenly I felt like I was on the right path to success and my goals started to seem a little less daunting. I called up a singing teacher to book my first singing lesson in years and I started meeting up with girlfriends for a walk instead of a drink. Small changes started making the world of difference to my daily happiness and satisfaction. Why didn't I do this before? I asked myself.

WHY IT WORKS

A life coach can help you find out what it is you really want and maintain the motivation you need to get there. “Having a coach keeps you focused on what it is you want to achieve and keeps you accountable.” Jen says. “You move forward in the direction

you choose faster with a coach than perhaps you would on your own. This gives you momentum, which is crucial when you are making changes in your life.”

As I have also learnt from Jen, a coach will help you gain clarity on what it is you truly desire. Sometimes, revealing our truest desires can be just too embarrassing a prospect. But as I discovered, admitting what you really want to the people around you, and most importantly yourself, seems to steer you towards it. If you want that promotion, declare it. Want to win Australian Idol? Tell someone. Even if you think your dream sounds too silly to tell with a straight face, being honest and open with your goals is a hurdle you need to get out of the way. And expect that some people will laugh – it's easier to deal with than you think.

BUMPS IN THE ROAD

Every week I would walk away from my meetings with a new to do list to complete before my next session. Sometimes the list would involve simple things like cleaning my room or packing my lunches for the week. Sometimes it would mean opening a savings account or going to the gym three times a week. Sometimes I would get everything on my list done and sometimes I would lose track and fail to complete all

my tasks; leaving me feeling disappointed and frustrated with myself.

Jen was surprisingly understanding and easy to talk to even when I didn't reach all my weekly goals. Far from being a setback, this provided an opportunity to figure out why I couldn't get something done and work on it. “The big key here for when set tasks aren't done is to not drop the ball and give up,” Jen explains. “To pick up the pieces and move forward will always bring you the success you desire and deserve.” Often, these discussions would lead to us re-evaluating my goals or creating new ones. If I didn't have enough time in my week to achieve all my goals, it could mean I needed to look at rearranging my schedule. If I didn't feel motivated to do something, perhaps my goal needed to be more compelling. As Jen likes to say, life doesn't always go according to plan, which is one of the things that makes it so exciting.

ENJOYING THE JOURNEY

“You're so much happier lately,” a close friend told me about five weeks into my coaching. Is it that obvious? I thought. I hadn't even achieved all of my goals and yet I was feeling like I was exactly where I wanted to be in life. My new routine, though often hectic at times, was exciting

IOLANDE'S EXPERIENCE



“I had so many goals that I had put on the back burner for so long, I always meant to start them but was too busy or just never got round to it. It felt so amazing to finally initiate my goals – like a huge weight lifted off my shoulders.”

The biggest thing I got out of life coaching is believing that I really can do anything, I can achieve any goal I set out to do. I have become much more confident in my abilities and have been able to plan and prepare for the future, eg. Implementing a financial plan.”



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LIFE COACHING

Our life coach Jennifer Atkins from Genesis Mind & Body, says a life coach is a bit like a ‘personal trainer for the mind’. Helping you reach your life goals and overcome obstacles. A life coach will help you:

Work out what is and is not working in your life
Help you establish compelling goals
Help inspire and empower you with practical and philosophical tools to help you get what you really want
Motivate you and keep you on track ...and so much more.

A LIFE COACH IS NOT

A counsellor, psychologist or psychiatrist. They don't work on your past, they focus on your future.

experiences gives me a sense of purpose and, ultimately, fulfilment. I have learnt to never accept living in an unhappy situation. After all we are all in the driver's seat, steering our life where we want it to go.

SO WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE THIS YEAR?

If you keep putting off the things you want then it's time to break the cycle. Yes. Do it now! A life coach can help you design the 2009 that you want and help you follow through on your plans. Don't sit back any longer and let your life control how you feel, think and act. It's time to take action - find someone who will make sure you don't hold yourself back any longer. Because this is your year!

Oxygen challenges readers to discover a “new you” in the New Year. We have made it so easy to get started with our pull-out Design 2009 page that you just can't refuse. And just remember you can do anything! 🍀

Stay tuned for Jennifer Atkins new column in our next issue! If you do decide to make positive changes this year, make sure you let us know how it goes - editorial@oxygenmag.com.au.

and fulfilling, keeping both my mind and body in much better condition.

At the end of the 12 weeks I had achieved most of my goals, or was well on track to achieving them. I didn't feel like a different person, rather, I was just looking at the world a lot differently. Before, I convinced myself that I couldn't have all the things I really wanted, whether they be a holiday or a dream job. But I know now that I can have everything I want and more as long as I work and persist for it – just like Jen said.

Today, this is what I feel I have gotten from my 12 amazing weeks of life coaching.

A renewed ability to actively control my happiness and enjoy the journey to the things I want. In essence, my goals were small (to be honest I can't even remember what all of them were), but they were very significant in changing the way I handle my life. I now feel balanced, complete and in control. I am constantly trying to fill my head and my heart with new knowledge, experiences and energy. This way, when I turn up to work each day I have something new to bring to the table – not just a recap of what I watched on TV last night.

Continuing to move forward in my life and providing myself with new