

Personal and Professional Coaching...A Burgeoning Need By Suzanne Douglas Harris

Ask several people why they think coaching is flourishing at such an accelerated rate, and each will probably give you a different answer. Despite what initially appears to be unique responses, when further reviewed, they all point to the same two key drivers.

1. The traditional family has changed significantly. In the past family members lived in close proximity to one another, sometimes with multiple generations residing in the same home.

The extended family remained very close-knit, serving as the primary resource for advice, problem solving, and for support. Families today are geographically dispersed, both in this country and around the world.

2. Today's men and women are often juggling demands both in- and outside the home. We are all expected to do more, and do it rapidly.

These two factors inhibit the time and the ease for family members to reach out to one another with ongoing frequency. Yet, the need for advice, mentoring, and encouragement has increased as more people are assuming added responsibilities for which they have no prior understanding and experience.

People still need a sounding board to help deal with the daily challenges and opportunities, we're being faced with today. Rather than 'going it alone', many people are turning to an objective 'outside' coach for their support in identifying and clarifying their needs, issues and opportunities, and for their expertise in developing a practical action plan to address the situation. Personal and/or professional coaches not only help their clients develop a customized plan, they stand by them to provide the ongoing support they need to take action and make things happen. In doing so, a coach's role can be that of an advisor, cheerleader, a mentor, or a consultant.

Individuals often rely on a personal coach to help them while facing a major life change, or when they want more out of their life. Their common ground is that they recognize a need for objective help to move beyond their situation and to take action. Those struggling through divorce, life after divorce, career direction or change, experiencing a significant lifestyle change or those in need of developing new personal skill(s) have all reaped the benefits from personal coaching. These benefits include issue or value clarification, practical problem solving, objective feedback, alternatives exploration, development of a clear focus, action planning and sustained advocacy.

Professional coaching services respond to the needs of business owners, executives and professionals by helping them to achieve more, manage change, manage better, and become more productive and less stressed. Professional coaching clients are often in need of a confidential, non-judgmental sounding board, or another business professional with whom they can discuss their situation and ideas openly and receive unbiased

feedback. Often this relationship evolves to one where the professional coach becomes the trusted business advisor. Similar to personal coaching, the focus of professional coaching is to identify the issue(s), gain objective feedback, engage in practical problem solving, and develop and implement an action plan to address the situation. Professional coaching clients, who remain committed to their plan, reap the most frequently cited benefits of improved business and leadership performance, and/or a better work/life balance.

I am frequently asked for my opinion on how the services provided by a coach differ from those of a therapist. I believe that a therapist finds out what makes you tick, while a personal coach keeps you ticking. Whereas, a professional performance coach helps business professionals gain clarity and focus, explore new ideas, and share their ideas confidentially with an educated, unbiased businessperson. With this coaching, they accomplish more and faster than they would on their own. They stay "on top of their game".

Suzanne Douglas Harris provides Personal and Professional Performance Coaching services to individuals, and to business owners, executives or professionals. She recently announced her practice opening at 40 Richards Avenue in Norwalk. Ms. Harris' brings a distinctive blend of expertise and personal empathy to her practice. She maintains a real world perspective based on a comprehensive background of corporate, consulting and academic experience, and has personally survived and thrived through many of life's major obstacles. As a result, she offers empathy and firsthand, practical advice. Suzanne Harris Personal and Professional Performance Coaching can be reached by phone at 203.852.6532, or by email at sh@sharriscoaching.com.