

What I Learned From My Life Coach

BY R. G. KATZ

Without my life coaching journal in hand or a few minutes to unwind, I wasn't ready when Julie Starr of Possibility Life Coaching for Women called from Toronto. I had just returned from the supermarket and was fuming over a picture on the front page of a national newspaper. Not only was it inappropriate, the caption beneath it was demeaning to another country. "I can't believe a reputable paper could put that on the front page," I told her feeling the anger rise inside me.

Her answer? "Don't waste your energy on negativity." Yes, she agreed that I should write a short letter to the editor stating how disappointed I am in the paper (*Disappointed* was her word; I preferred *appalled*.), but after that, let it go. "You can't take it all in and be healthy," she said.

For me to be healthy, I need to let go of a lot of things. And from my life

coach, I've learned that sometimes letting go happens through ruthlessness.

Starr, in her soft-spoken manner sounds far from ruthless. But the ruthlessness she encourages is essential to achieving goals. In the beginning, she encouraged me to be ruthless in

letting go of clutter. Before my move from the four-bedroom house I lived in for 36 years to a two-bedroom apartment, Starr helped me trash things I no longer needed. Because I was reluctant to toss memorabilia, she said, "Bless it as you throw it out." I did, and it helped.

Even before the house sold, she encouraged me to write down what my dream apartment would look like – it came pretty close. In her non-judgmental way, she helped me think positively and take action. This day, however, the last of our one-on-one teleconferences was the best of all.

It wasn't only the front page of the paper that distressed me. Everything in my hectic schedule was bothering me.

At record speed, I jumped from one topic to another until Julie said, "Your brain is racing." She urged me to breathe and "bring down the pace."

Then, she hit on my main problem: "feeling overwhelmed," to which she added, "Women are always overwhelmed." I was aware of that feeling, but not how to change. To begin, she gave me an easy exercise in grounding, encouraging me to lie on the floor three or four times a day and breathe

to "bring yourself back to yourself." (Getting down was easy, getting back up was the challenge!)

The next twenty minutes were crucial as it helped me realize that I'm overwhelmed because I'm constantly seeking approval. It was like a light bulb going off in my racing brain. She mapped out a plan of what I had to do to change, reminding me that it takes time. She characteristically added "Do it with *ease*. Be *gentle* with yourself. And take one step at a time."

At the end of the session, she set up four fields of work for me to tackle: Caring for myself, budgeting my time, walking regularly, and looking at what overwhelms me. First, I had to *let go* of reasons to avoid the work: not enough time in the day, too much to do, I don't feel like it. The goal was to find a place of comfort where I want to be.

With the affirmation "I choose actions that are good for me" posted on my white board, I'm going to try. Before I write that letter to the editor and share my feelings about his choice for a front-page picture, I'm going for a walk. My life coach is teaching me there's a time to be ruthless in letting go and a time to slow down and contemplate what's going on that I might change.

Thank you, Julie.

