

Passion for Life Coaching

Making Deliberate Choices for a Fulfilling Life

Newsletter by Suzette Langley, Life Coach and MSW

June 2006

Does Your Self-Image Need an Update?

No one can make you feel inferior without your permission. – Eleanor Roosevelt

Have I ever mentioned that I love my job?? As a coach, I am blessed to have individuals share their lives and stories with me. I always feel privileged to be granted such access. In addition to feeling privileged, I feel less alone. My clients help me realize we all experience similar struggles and feelings at some point, or many points, in our lives. I am grateful for this knowledge because this is not something we as adults go around openly discussing.

Perhaps our unwillingness to discuss that we don't know all the answers comes from the image we create of adulthood at an early age. Let me ask you this – as a child, did you look at adults with awe and amazement? Adults appeared to know everything, have it all together, and be able to do whatever they wanted. What a great deal compared to childhood! You couldn't wait until you were an adult! When you played, you would act like a grown up, driving your bike by the rules of the road and using your parents' junk mail as "important business paperwork." Yet, somehow as you got older things got more complicated, responsibility increased, and adulthood lost its shine. But, how could you admit you didn't know the answers. Now you are the adult, and adults have the answers. But how is the image you created working for you? Are you struggling to get through life when someone you know could have the answer you need?

This is an example of an outdated self-image created from a child's perspective. We often operate from outdated self-images. What does that mean exactly? As children, teens, or adults, we develop certain images of ourselves from the situations we experience and the people we associate with. Once we develop these images, they become who we are. But what happens if they no longer serve us?

Here's another great example starring me. When I was a kid, I was not "cool." I like to say that I had 3 strikes – smart, fat, and glasses. All I was missing were braces on my teeth to add to my "not cool quotient." As you can imagine, with my qualities, I was not particularly athletic, and I tried to make it through a day unnoticed. When I got to high school, I was a mathlete and drama queen. I boycotted gym by walking the mile fitness test. By the time I reached college, my then boyfriend, now husband, exerted his positive influence on my attitude towards fitness. I decided that I would start exercising. I started with weight lifting, then added cardio machines, began running, took up step aerobics, and somewhere along the way changed my eating habits. All of these changes improved my self-esteem, appearance, and confidence.

Despite these positive changes, I still can feel like the fat, nerdy, shy, awkward kid. In situations when I am unfamiliar, overwhelmed, or uncertain, I seem to revert back to that old self-image. Why? It's safe. I know how to act and how others will react to me. The question is – does it help me? No, in reality, I reinforce the

negative self-image because I withdraw and then think others don't like me or find me interesting. Fortunately, I have learned to identify when I feel my "old self" creeping in, and I remind myself that I am no longer that person. Instead, I repeat to myself that I am strong, confident, outgoing, and smart. I have worked hard to change my self-image, and it's ok to claim it. And, it's ok to sound smart, especially if I am talking about what I love and my area of expertise.

What I have discovered in conversations with my clients is that everyone seems to have an "old self." Maybe it's the comedian who tells jokes to cover up being nervous. Maybe it's the bragger who tells great stories to make sure she looks good. Maybe it's the perfectionist making sure everything is just right so she feels confident. Or, like at the beginning of the newsletter, maybe it's just being the adult with all the answers but really being unsure.

Do you have an outdated self-image? When does that self-image come into play? How is it hindering you? What can you do to change that? Send me your story. The more we share, the more answers we will find.

"I've finally stopped running away from myself, who else is there better to be?" -Goldie Hawn

Upcoming Events at Big Vanilla Athletic Club

Summer Fun

The weather is nice and you want to be outside having fun. Somehow you cannot seem to find the time in your busy schedule. In this 1-hour workshop, learn 9 ways to help you have the time you want!

Tuesday, June 13 at 6:00pm. Cost: \$20 per person

Resolution Check-Up

The year is half over. Chances are you made a New Year's Resolution. Have you kept that resolution? Are you satisfied with the progress you have made? If not, this 6-week group will help you refocus your attention, set attainable goals, and remove roadblocks to success. Make 2006 your year!

Group begins Wednesday, June 14 at 6:00pm. Cost: \$150 for the 6 weeks

For all workshops and groups, call 410-544-2525 to register. Space is limited.

Please forward this newsletter to others you believe would enjoy it. I welcome new subscribers! To subscribe/unsubscribe, please send an email to passionforlifecoaching@verizon.net. I also welcome feedback and ideas for future topics.

For more information, visit www.passion-for-life-coaching.com.

To learn how to overcome the emotional roadblocks to living a healthy lifestyle and create your success plan for emotional fitness, contact Suzette Langley, at passionforlifecoaching@verizon.net or at 410-757-7326. Schedule a complimentary 30-minute session. Coaching sessions are generally conducted by telephone so you do not need to reside in the same area as the coach.