

How A Coach Saved My Life

Everyone with AD/HD knows the routine. The answer to every "What are you doing this weekend?" question is "Organizing my life." Every three-day weekend, weeks off from work during the summer or at Christmas, I was constantly trying to "organize my life." I used to blame my hectic schedule. I work full-time as a university administrator, I teach part-time at a local college, I have three children, and I'm involved with Girl Scouts and I volunteer at my children's schools. However, on the days that I would specifically set aside to clean up the clutter, balance the checkbook, or find one or two misplaced cell phone batteries, I simply could not figure out what to do first and the day would end somewhere on the continuum between frustration and self-loathing. Sorting, deciding if something should be tossed out, or where its home should be is not rocket science. Even so, I couldn't seem to figure out how to do it.

During one particularly frustrating weekend I noticed a page of ads for AD/HD coaches in this magazine. By this time, I was desperate. I had tried countless times and still I didn't know my bank balance or even the location of my checkbook. My family and friends had been supportive and they would have done anything to help, but none knew how to really help. For

my own sense of self worth, I had to be able to take care of the basic things in my life and arrange my stuff so that I could find something other than ice cubes consistently.

It was a significant indication of the degree of my desperation that I even considered working with a coach. Hiring someone to help make decisions was such an odd concept. Several months earlier one of my closest friends (non-ADD) mentioned getting a coach. I had rolled my eyes and in an incredulous tone I sighed and said, "Linda Beth, a coach? Isn't that called having a friend?" Nevertheless, in complete desperation I decided to try one more time to bring order to the chaos of my life. Working with a coach was the only thing I had not tried before.

I connected with Sandy Maynard and my first question was, "Do you take long-distance clients?" My second question was "Do you really think you can help me?" Her answer to both was yes. I certainly did not have her level of confidence. However, I am fortunate that her confidence was well founded.

Our first telephone appointment lasted an hour. I explained the trouble spots (at least the top 100), the obstacles (me, me, me), and listed a few of my priorities. Then we made a plan. I felt hopeful and somewhat amazed. For the first time in decades, I felt that my elusive dream of getting my life organized could actually be possible.

Our appointments are less formal now. Sometime we just leave voice messages. Sometimes I get overwhelmed and we have to start from the beginning. Other times we have to break a task into smaller and smaller parts before I can actually tackle it. Nevertheless, we do it. And for the first time, I am making progress. Someone who actually knows how to help people with AD/HD is guiding me; a friend, yes, but a friend with very special skills.

We have been working together since late October 2001 and my life is not yet "totally organized," however, I've kept up with my hectic schedule with much less stress. I'm only a month behind on my checkbook and I found one of the missing cell phone batteries. I am making progress. Last Saturday I received mid-term report forms from the college. I immediately completed the report and for the first time ever, was able to accurately report the number of absences for each student. It may not mean much to those in the non-ADD world, but to my coach and to me, it represents real progress and a sense of hope that I did not have before. \blacksquare

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