

Staying Healthy

JANUARY 23, 2015

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pleasanton-based life coach
Lisa Fairchild.

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Finding a fresh perspective

Life coaches can help you define your goals and live life to the fullest

When Caroline, 42, welcomed a woman into her home, courtesy of Airbnb, the two ended up having some good conversations. The guest noted all the decorative candles that Caroline had placed throughout her tasteful condo and suggested she light them for herself. Don't save them for visitors, she advised, but light them to bring beauty and joy into your own life.

The lodger was a life coach. During the last couple decades, people have been turning to life coaches to help them define their goals and achieve them, whether in their personal lives or careers. The coach objectively helps them identify their strengths, their values and their purpose, and together they develop a plan. The coach then assists them around any

obstacles, plus celebrates their successes with them.

"Life coaching is listening, acknowledging, asking all kinds of questions," said Pleasanton life coach Lisa Fairchild. "It really comes from a place of believing that people aren't broken and have their own answers. You pull them out in terms of questioning and giving assignments, finding out what works

for them and allows them to have in life what they want."

Fairchild first had hired a life coach for herself.

"My background is in human resources," she said. "Then I went through a pretty significant life change, I got divorced ... I needed to go back to work but didn't want to go to a regular job because I had a teenager at home."

"I hired a coach to figure out what I wanted to do. I wanted work to align with my skills, and hours that worked," Fairchild said.

"There are things in life that happen that throw us out of whack. How you approach them can make all the difference — it can be the starting point for something new and better," she said.

Fairchild completed her training at Coach Inc., one of the founding schools of the discipline, went on to complete an advanced coaching program, and now is credentialed through International Coach Federation.

"Coaching is very forward-focused, very action-orientated," she said. "You have to be willing to do things differently, to explore and play, to tell the truth and take action."

Most life coaches work with clients via telephone or Skype.

"Coaching is meant to be on the phone," Fairchild said. "I do not have an office, we may meet in my home, their home, on the phone or in a coffee shop. I have a client in Kansas and we Skype."

"The advantage is that being on the phone is more succinct, it gets to the heart and gets them in action. My part is to be here and pick up their body language over the phone," she added.

A life coach is different from a therapist, and Fairchild said she has found that some clients may be better served in therapy, such as those suffering depression.

"I would certainly encourage them to go to therapy," she said. "Or if I was working with someone and continually things about their past came up, it would be an indicator they need therapy."

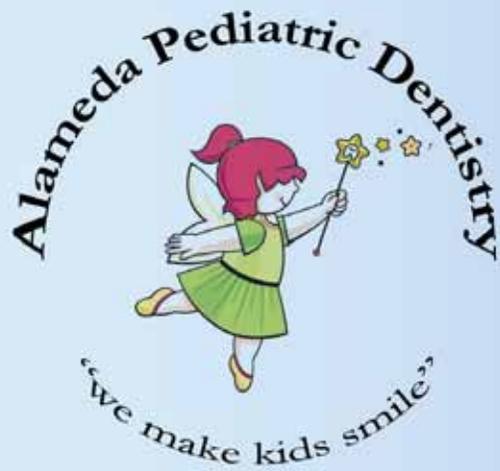
"Coaching helps you move forward faster; therapy digs inside and looks for why, what pattern of thoughts gets in your way," explained life coach Mai Vu, who works out of Pleasanton and Danville. "Coaching looks at what you want and how to create that."

"A therapist is for when you hit the same pattern over and over again and want to understand the cause of that," she added. "If you just want to move forward and create strategies to do that, a coach is better."

Vu cited two sources for life coaching in the Bay Area, the Coaches Training Institute in San Rafael and Coach U, which operates more online.

"Together they really spearheaded and brought this technology into the world — and have been rocking the world for the last

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Learn more about this program or register online at HopeHospice.com or call (925) 829-8770

STAYING HEALTHY

COACHES

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Life coach Mai Vu, who operates out of Pleasanton and Danville.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

20-plus years," she said.

Industrial psychologists have helped senior executives for years to improve their skills, and sports psychologists can be found in the stands at any sporting event. Life coaches specialize in areas such as relationship coaching, health coaching, career coaching, business coaching, executive coaching and leadership coaching, to name a few.

Vu is a relationship coach.

"My typical client is around 42-43, and she has been divorced for a few years, has one or two kids, around 5 and 8 years old," Vu said. "She is exhausted, trying to keep her career going and she's also trying to be a good mom. She doesn't have time for a date, and when she does date, she is wondering why all the good guys are taken, and how come her ex-husband is such a jerk to her. She's in a real bind."

Before anything else, her kids need to be thriving, Vu said, plus she has to be able to pay her bills. Then she can possibly relax and start dating.

"In order to get those pieces in alignment I have to help her get in touch with herself," Vu said. "I have to help her resentment, her abandonment issues, her anger. She has to tend to herself and start moving forward."

Vu was a mechanical engineer for many years, climbing the corporate ladder at PG&E.

"I was being promoted, had a house in Pleasanton. I was fine. I was safe, secure and successful but not fulfilled and not fully happy," she recalled. "I started questioning leadership and people's relationships with each other."

She earned a master's degree in organization development and questioned how people work and their dealings with each other. She began coaching men and women clients but gradually began to focus on women and their relationships.

"Either they are married but their marriage is on the rocks, or they are already divorced and want to bring new love into their lives," she said.

Vu is an international coach and speaker. She hosts events called "Hot Life, Hot Love," with the next one taking place at the Holiday Inn in Dublin on March 7-8.

"When all of the pieces in your life work together, it's really super 'hot,'" she explained. "Hot" might also mean when things go bad — it's how you solve it, in a way that is loving, that is effective, and no drama."

"I used to just call it 'Hot Love' but people wouldn't want to sign up for it on Facebook because they didn't want their friends to see," she added with a laugh.

Anne Kirwan, who moved here from Ireland in 2001, runs a nonprofit organization and hired Vu to help her become the best possible leader.

"Life coaching helps us to bring out our strengths and be bigger, better and bolder," Kirwan said. "My family is back in Ireland so I am creating a new life in the U.S. and wanted a life as fulfilling as possible."

"I tend to be an analytical person, and I wanted to work with a coach that wasn't analytical," she continued. "We all have ways to muddle through life — my way was to work through pros and cons, 'paralysis by analysis,' so from that point of view I think Mai

is a great champion of the people she works with. And she would also really challenge me if I were resisting change."

"I think effective coaching is a mixture of championship and challenge," she added. "It starts from the premise that we're all creative, resourceful and whole, then we have to identify who we want to be and what mark we want to have on the world."

"Coaching is really supporting you to just be more fully yourself," Kirwan said. "You leave the baggage behind and move forward more fully with your life."

Kirwan said she receives her coaching about 95% on the phone, with a bit of emailing back and forth, and she likes the efficiency.

"We are all very busy professionals. I coach with Mai at 7 a.m. for 45 minutes, and it gets my day off to a good start," she said.

"Life is a constant journey," she added. "I'm always aiming higher. I can see how my life in terms of friendships and relationships has become so much more fulfilling and joyful."

Gail Koffman is another woman who started on a path of self-discovery with a life coach and realized that she wanted to become a coach herself.

"The interesting thing is I am still in this process of recreating myself and realize I have a lot to offer as a coach myself," Koffman said. "One of the key ingredients is to have great listening skills and empathy and offer support, and that's part of my personality. Why not make good use of my natural abilities? I like to specialize in people in transition."

She said her life coach — who helps people in transition, especially in their careers — helped her define in general what she wanted, asking, "What do you want your life to feel like and look like?"

"She gave me and other people in the class different activities and exercises to practice," Koffman recalled. "In general it's nice to have support, to know I wasn't alone in this journey of transitioning."

"Ever since I've been taking coach training programs, I'm seeing a variety of different styles and coaching techniques," she said. "Most recently I studied with Lion Goodman who does the Clear Your Beliefs ... you can only go so far in life as your hidden beliefs will allow you to. Through this ingenious process we work through someone's subconscious, find the hidden beliefs, and let go of the hidden beliefs that hold us back and replace them with affirming beliefs."

"When does someone need a life coach? When her heart hungers for something more than she has," Vu said. "She knows she should be treated better, she deserves more than this, but by herself she can't seem to do it. That's the perfect time to go to a life coach." ■

'There are things in life that happen that throw us out of whack. How you approach them can make all the difference — it can be the starting point for something new and better'

Lisa Fairchild
Pleasanton life coach

Exercising on the slopes

Four common errors to avoid after putting on those skis

BY CHALKY WHITE

As the season continues and skiers of all levels journey to the Sierra, chances are that a great many of them will do some things that won't help their cause.

You can boil down skiing to a few basic principles, but like any sport, there are many finer details that matter, and with a winter activity like skiing, the details can mean the difference between a safe ski trip and a hazardous one.

Skiing is a truly wonderful sport; it changed my life. I hate to think that there are beginners who may be steered away from it due to avoidable mistakes. And, there are those who've become decent skiers — they love the sport and they continue skiing each season — but they're held back by questionable technique and inaccurate practice.

Here are four common mistakes that skiers make on snow-capped slopes:

"I'm too old to be a great skier, so I'll just wing it."

Some people are raised on the slopes, carving up the snow at age 6 and entering competitions at age 8. Most folks, however, have average natural ability and aren't raised on skis. But they can, if accurately trained, become very competent skiers.

If you're completely new to ski-



COURTESY OF WHITE

Professional ski instructor Chalky White glides down a slope.

ing, take the time to learn some basics — preferably with a qualified instructor. The most important fundamental to learn is balance, as applied to skiing; all sports rely on

balance to some extent, and for skiing it all starts there.

"I can be great if only I can overcome my fear."

Indeed, hurling one's body down

what they perceive to be a steep slope of slippery snow takes courage. It makes sense to have butterflies at the top of a slope, but overcoming nerves alone won't make you great.

Some skiers, even a few new to the sport, have little fear when skiing — but that's often because they've practiced and have undergone sound training. The more adept you become as a skier, the more fear-based emotion is pushed to the "back-burner" and is, as practice continues, largely replaced by new-found confidence and more fun.

"I'm beyond the basics."

Ninety-five percent of skiers, including some professionals, do not fully appreciate and utilize the power of balance — at least not consciously. Many simply believe they are fully balanced, but this is often delusional and maybe arrogant thinking. The best advice is to be a constant student, which means consistent vigilance toward one's balance.

A great skier is one who can consistently recover following balance losses. You may be frustrated that you lost balance at all. However, the ability to recover with ease is a sign that you are well-balanced.

"I don't want to pre-release from my ski bindings; my gear seems OK."

Just as it is silly to think that gear alone will make you a good skier, so too is the idea that gear doesn't have specific requirements. Most vitally, you'll want to make sure ski bindings — a device that connects

a ski boot to a ski — adhere to the right DIN (German for "Deutscher Institut Fuer Normung") standard.

If your bindings are accurately set to suit your age, ability and weight, and if you are skiing with proper technique, you will probably not pre-release from them. But if you make a mistake serious enough to merit a release from attachment to your skis before falling, then chances of injury are dramatically decreased. Some skiers tamper with these professional standards to prevent release, which can be extremely dangerous.

Other important facets include boots — the most important gear item for technique — and ski poles, which should be the correct length.

I have heard far too many disturbing stories due to the inaccurate setting of the binding alone. Too many of my friends, and the general skiing fraternity, have experienced broken legs. Don't be one of many skiers, experts included, who neglect the binding setting. Get your skis' bindings regularly checked by a professional, and don't tamper with them. ■

Chalky White, author of "The 7 Secrets of Skiing," is a professional ski instructor who is highly regarded for helping to develop balance for skiers of all levels, including experts. He has taught students in the Alps, New Zealand and the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, where he remains a longtime member of the esteemed Vail and Beaver Creek Ski School. Chalky is also a motivational speaker.

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STAYING HEALTHY

Breakfast and beyond

Show kids just how delicious veggies can be



FAMILY FEATURES

Eggs, sausages, cheese, cream and frozen veggies make for a delicious, nutritious breakfast served in individual ramekins.

A great day starts with a balanced breakfast filled with healthy ingredients fit for the whole family. Enticing the youngest family members to enjoy as many food groups as possible at the morning meal — including veggies — may be challenging, but it's an important step to ensuring a well-rounded diet all day long.

Here are some tips to get youngsters to eat more vegetables, starting with the breakfast table and continuing throughout the day.

1. Look for dining occasions for vegetables throughout the day, including breakfast.

While veggies are often only thought of at dinnertime, parents can help ensure their kids get the proper amount of vegetables by combining frozen fruit and veggies into other meals and snacks, such as smoothies. These are a great start to the morning and an easy way to work in extra servings of fruits and vegetables.

Another option is combining many ingredients, including veggies, into a single breakfast dish, such as the baked eggs with peppers and breakfast sausage recipe below.

2. Whether frozen or fresh, it's important to get veggies in every meal.

Nine out of 10 Americans don't eat enough vegetables on a daily basis, so incorporating them into each meal is important.

From a nutritional perspective, there is little to no difference between fresh and frozen vegetables. Veggies are often flash-frozen within four hours after harvest, locking in peak freshness, nutrients, taste and color. Easy to store in the freezer, they make it a snap to have nutritious ingredients on hand for any meal.

3. Mix up the veggie and flavor profiles to keep meals exciting.

It's easy to become bored with the same meals or flavors, so mix up mealtime. Vegetable varieties are available year-round at

Baked eggs with peppers and breakfast sausage

- 6 ounces breakfast sausage (if links, remove from casing)
- 1/2 bag Frozen pepper & onion blend
- 4 large eggs
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup whole milk or heavy cream
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Lightly grease four 8-ounce ramekins with nonstick cooking spray.

Brown sausage over medium heat in nonstick skillet, stirring and breaking up sausage, about five minutes. Stir in peppers and onions and cook, stirring occasionally, five minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Evenly divide vegetable mixture among prepared ramekins.

Gently break one egg into each ramekin and season with salt and pepper. Evenly top each egg with milk and cheese.

Place ramekins on baking sheet. Bake 10-12 minutes or until egg white is opaque but yolk is still soft.

Garnish with parsley and serve.

affordable prices, fresh as well as frozen in the Bay Area, allowing families to change up their meals regardless of the season.

With a little creativity, you will have the kids in your family eating more vegetables at every meal, beginning with breakfast. ■

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