The Power of Self
Coactive Coaching: Changing Business, Transforming Lives
by Zornitsa Stefanova (Bulgaria)

Let's Meditate on Coaching
by Denisa Palii (Germany)

'A Life Now Worth Living'
The Inside Story Behind the Creation of the Popular Self-help Life Coaching Book
by Ashley Gordon and Brian Tregunna (UK)

Quest for Inner Peace
by Catherine Wuillaume (Belgium)

3 Key Lifestyle Habits to Upgrade Your Life
by Cristina Burca (Romania)
Welcome to another exciting edition of the International Coaching News (iCN) online magazine!

Our 22nd edition, is themed Wellness & Holistic Coaching, inspired by coaches to guide others forge their own unique path toward greater well-being, a holistic view of the importance of growth and the power of self.

This edition is filled with interesting power tools toward greater well-being. It focuses on enabling you as the coach to assist your clients to mastermind life transitions, manifesting anything (and everything) they desire.

In this 22nd edition, look out for the article ‘The Importance of Wellness and Holistic Coaching-The View from One of the UK’s Largest Housing Providers’ by Malcolm Nicholson iCN Journalist from United Kingdom. In this interview with Orbit’s Head of Tenancy Sustainment, Kevin Hornsby discusses how they adopted Sir John Whitmore’s GROW model, ensuring they are giving their customers the best chance of sustaining their tenancy. Another noteworthy article ‘Nature or Nurture, You Control the Switch!’ by Katherine S. Egan from USA, enumerates some tools that can be used when creating the healthy, vitality and energy we all deserve while keeping life simple. Another article to look out for ‘Let’s Meditate on Coaching’ by Denisa Palii of Germany, discusses the link between ‘meditation’ and ‘coaching’. ‘3 Key Lifestyle Habits to Upgrade Your Life’ by Cristina Burca of Romania, interviews Jo Ritchie shares 3 habits we can integrate to upgrade our lives. Each of our columnists, too numerous to mention, has taken some really interesting perspectives, and I would encourage a thorough read-through of this edition.

Just like all our other editions, this edition is not just an interesting read, but it provides you with helpful coaching tools, personal development ideas and professional development techniques to grow your business and improves lifestyle.

I hope you enjoy this issue and do let us know if there are any topics you’d like to see covered in the future.

Leeann
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   by Cristina Maria Cojocariu
It is rare to come across a major initiative within an organisation that positively impacts not only changing the culture of the organisation but also changing customers’ lives. Recently, I had a conversation with Kevin Hornsby, Head of Tenancy Sustainment for Orbit, a leading housing provider in the UK. The power of coaching as a tool for positive social impact became very evident. Kevin said ‘At Orbit, we are reviewing our approach to the tenancies we offer and the support and advice we provide to our customers to achieve successful and sustainable tenancies. At the heart of this change is a brand new, sector-leading coaching model, turning our current service inside out, from a support and actions based model, to one focused on empowerment and coaching.’

Kevin continued “To give the size of the problem some scope, here are some results of our research. One in 10 of our households have used foodbanks in the last year and have taken out a quick cash loan or used cash converters. We also know that out of the more than 1,000 customers who received money advice in the last 12 months, almost two in five were households with children. Around 75% of our customers in receipt of Universal Credit are in rent arrears – we know these statistics are not unique to Orbit and housing providers up and down the country are encountering similar challenges. Make no mistake, this is a massive problem for many, many households. In responding to a challenging operating environment, we needed to review the way we worked.”

The Required Outcomes

If Orbit were to continue to operate as an efficient business, responsible landlord and one of the largest developers of new affordable homes in the sector, they had to change the way they operated their tenancies. They needed to:

• Minimise the impact of Universal Credit on the organisation
• Improve the consistency of their services – becoming more proactive
• Reduce the number of customers in rent arrears, and
• To make their services more accessible, simple and easy to understand for customers

“The result of change must be empowering customers to fulfil their potential. With a renewed focus on tenancy sustainment rather than traditional housing management and persistent focus on turnaround times, our role becomes more about the customers, we house and the support we offer as opposed to simply the properties we own and manage. Our aim is simple - we want to enable our customers to have a successful tenancy and transform their lives. We are focused on providing our customers with better days, every day.”

After months of research, insight gathering and consultation, Orbit has now launched a brand new coaching model focused on early intervention and prevention. Adopting Sir John Whitmore’s GROW model, Kevin reflected that Orbit ‘Feel both our leadership and customers will benefit from this simple method of goal setting and problem setting. The common and hugely successful framework has just four simple steps; Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap-up/Will.’

To ensure we are giving our customers the best chance of sustaining their tenancy, we have created a series of tenancy training courses, inspired by the GROW model and developed using the expertise of our in house employment team.”

Kevin Hornsby
Head of Tenancy Sustainment for Orbit

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Head of Tenancy Sustainment for Orbit

The Importance of Wellness and Holistic Coaching
The View from One of the UK’s Largest Housing Providers
by Malcolm Nicholson, iCN Journalist (UK)
There are six coaching sessions available for tenancies which can be delivered in either a 1-2-1 or group coaching environment with a focus on enabling our customers to become tenancy ready. The courses are:
- Keys to a successful Orbit tenancy
- Managing the unexpected
- Being a good neighbour
- Living in a thriving community
- Thinking about work
- Making a positive change

Given that only 17% of people in debt seek advice, we know that for many, taking action when struggling is difficult. At Orbit we estimate 5,000 of our households are struggling with money at any given time.

‘To help support these customers, a new Income Maximisation Team of specialists, including an underwriter function will now risk assess customers pre-tenancy and money coaches will help support with budgeting skills. The addition of Tenancy Underwriters is something new to the housing sector and previously synonymous with the banking or insurance sector. They will enable Orbit to make good decisions around the tenancies we offer and to identify the support needed from our Tenancy Sustainment Coaches.’

Kevin emphasised that ‘In my role of Head of Tenancy Sustainment, we see it is no longer enough for landlords to provide low-cost housing. Our role and remit is much wider and people require our support with increasing urgency. Our new coaching model allows us to assess our customers’ needs and life skills way before a tenancy is offered, meaning that we can have in place everything needed to make our tenancies a success from day one. We need to invest in our communities and in the people living in our homes; not just our assets and this is a key part of the new model.’

**Orbit’s Initiative and the context of third generation coaching**

It’s pretty easy to want to produce better results that affect the wellbeing of employees and customers. It’s far more difficult to translate those intentions into sustainable actions and behaviours. So let’s put the Orbit initiative into the context of the evolving world of the coaching. We are currently seeing third-generation workplace coaching, which typically promotes cultures of high functioning and high well-being, developing appropriate quality conversations. Such cultures aim to be anxiety-minimising by emphasising positive outcomes and by giving attention to personal and organisational values and goal alignment.

The Orbit initiative fits right in this space. Kevin concluded ‘With one in ten people living in a housing association home, our sector and a coaching based model is well-placed to help the thousands of struggling families across the country. As a responsible landlord responding to a challenging environment, we believe that our new coaching model will not only help thousands of people manage their tenancies, but also support them into employment and with their general wellbeing. All while enabling Orbit to run more efficiently and effectively, helping us to continue in our role of supporting people and helping tackle this country’s housing shortage.’

**A Success Story**

‘One of Orbit’s new Employment and Skills coaches has already had great success as a customer has used our ‘No Stopping Grant’ made available by the organisation, to help set up their own business.’ Said Kevin. ‘Due to ongoing health issues, the customer was finding it increasingly difficult to continue to fulfil her duties in her building and maintenance job. From talking through the concept of setting up her own business with one of our coaches in March, just a few months later the customer has now embarked on a new adventure, selling a range of completely natural sourced cleaning products, marketing them through an established Facebook page, Eco-Vie The Cleaning Power of Nature.’

**Moving Forward**

Orbit’s coaches typically work with a customer prior to the tenancy commencing and for anything up to six months as part of a tenancy success plan. All coaches will be upskilled and trained up to levels 3 and 5 in coaching to enable a successful and empowering customer journey with coaching at the heart of the service.
Some choices click with the yearning of the heart. They are in line with our values and we feel the deepest fulfilment of reaching our full potential. We say ‘yes’ to things that make way for our learning and personal growth and “no” to others that keep us away from our heart. At the same time we decide to make choices that are in our way to living a fulfilled and meaningful life. If a person keeps close to his heart and makes empowering choices, he enjoys the wonderful journey of a lifetime.

Having read ‘Co-Active Coaching’ I leaned back in my chair and realised that from that point on my life would be different, and I’d make a difference. For the book had made me ask myself many questions and find some answers, and thirsting to find yet many more. The book helped me realise coaching is the thing I’d love to do. Some questions and find some answers, and thirsting to find yet many more. The book helped me realise coaching is the thing I’d love to do.

A couple of years ago I learned to ask myself: What do you pretend you do not understand? Every one of us makes thousands of choices every day in our lives. What time do I wake up tomorrow? What will be the sound of the alarm clock? Shall I get up immediately? Shall I meditate? Shall I exercise? Tea or coffee? Or just water? Shall I go to the office or work from home? When shall I write the critique of the book? Shall I turn left or right? And because of all and each one of the choices I’ve made in my whole life, I am here and now, writing.

Conversations are often like high mountain lakes: calm surface, cold water, small waves from accidentally fallen leaves or insects. Below the surface of the words. The relationship between a coach and a coachee may be quite timid and superficial at first, and then deepens. The conversation goes on focused on the coachee’s topic or goal, or result. However, the coach listens below the surface of the words. Blocked energy may be freed and its flow may lighten up sleeping or long-forgotten potential. Just one conversation and yet many peels may be peeled off, many fears may be faced and overcome; many internal hidden or unconscious barriers may be over passed. In just one conversation the coachee may remember words, phrases, whole sentences from his own inner language.

A beautiful relationship of confidence, trust, openness and truthfulness. The coachee may enter with his enthusiasm, willingness to change, yearning to reach his best in Life, thirsting to learn and develop, and find and be his real Self. The coach may enter in the relationship with eyes wide open for the magic of the transformation of the coachee and create a safe place of love for him.

At this sacred place of love, support, and understanding, the two of them may begin their heartfelt dance. The dancers may change their costumes. The tone or rhythm of the music may change. Igniting tango may follow the wild hip-hop. A dignifying waltz may melt into a rock ballad. Sometimes the coach leads the dance, sometimes the coachee leads and at these magical moments when the two souls meet, no one notices who in fact leads and who follows in the wonderful process of self-discovery. And although the whole process of coaching is centred on the coachee’s transformational change, the coach also learns and makes his choices and gets insights.

Co-Active Coaching is a powerful and insightful walk through the process of active collaboration between a coach and a coachee, a relationship of two equals to meet the needs of the coachee. When two people meet in a coach – coachee relationship and decide to integrate, they begin their dance. Co-Active Coaching gave me this powerful metaphor which tells everything. Coach and coachee may decide to create and nourish a beautiful relationship of confidence, trust, openness, and truthfulness. The coachee may

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And, as the authors emphasise, this process is often transformational because from this moment on, the coachee does not have the excuse: I don’t understand. From this moment on he takes charge of his own life. The coach is like litmus for the coachee’s process. The coach sees today’s topic or goal as a leaf in the tree. He also sees the branch of which the leaf is an integral part. Then down the trunk the coach reaches the roots for there is always the possibility of deeper connection. Deep-rooted believes, old habits and patterns that are in the way of coachee’s learning and inner power. And the dance continues right in the moment. The responsibility of the coach is to use his skills, intuition and inner knowledge.

Co-Active Coaching: Changing Business, Transforming Lives

by Zornitsa Stefanova (Bulgaria)
to feel where in his own process the coachee is at the moment, and serve him. The coach holds the vision that sees the specific topic as an expression of something even more valuable to the coachee. This particular action at hand during the session is the means to a higher end, life fully lived in all areas the coachee finds important. Be present in the moment and fully aware of what is going on is a wonderful gift the coach gives to the coachee. Gracefully the dance goes on.

What a beautiful movement! Two whole human beings meet with the richness of their hearts and souls, their life-time experiences. They embrace each other and dance. Although the coachee’s topic is danced around, the coach makes a step back and observes the process.

He knows: the coachee, the person who has trusted the embrace of his love, is whole. Health, family, relationships, career, spiritual life, entertainment as the Wheel of Life clearly shows... are just facets of the whole lovely Self in front of him. The coach’s stand is that the wonderful essence with whom he is dancing is naturally knowing, creative, and resourceful. The coachee has the capacity to find answers, make choices, take actions, learn and stand up after he has fallen down. Having this stand, the coach becomes curious what is, open to possibilities, exploring with the coachee, and like a small child becomes curious what is, open to possibilities, he has fallen down. Having this stand, the coach choices, take actions, learn and stand up after the coachee has the capacity to find answers, make choices, take actions, learn and stand up after he has fallen down. Having this stand, the coach knows: the coachee, the person who has trusted the embrace of his love, is whole.

Co-Active Coaching emphasises that while at the beginning of the coaching process coachee may often include outward measures of fulfilment like more money, promotion, new lover, social status, eventually he will move to a deeper understanding of fulfilment. While at the beginning of the process he may focus on ‘do’ and ‘have’, he will eventually look deeper in his being. The coach is there to serve the coachee sort out his values and live according to them, in synchrony with his heart, reach his full potential.

Often the coachee initially has the idea what exactly he wants more of: money, sex, love, joy... He lives unbalanced life and is blaming himself for not being god enough. And then eventually he gets aware that life is about change. He is tending towards equilibrium and when he reaches it, the change continues. So he basically all life moves either towards the point of balance or out of it. So happiness, balance is not a state, but a journey. Along the way supported by the coach in his process, the coachee decides to say ‘yes’ to some things, however equally neutrally he learns to say ‘no’ to others in order to open new space for new experiences. So that the dance may continue.

The coach serves the coachee in this wonderful process of finding the light. The outcome of this process is action and learning that lead to change. So, the coach is a change agent and he forwards the action of the coachee. The coach broadens the perspectives. In order to move ahead, the coachee has to choose and commit to certain actions. The coach is there to feel, hear, smell the turbulence and name it. He curiously explores it from all sides and turns it upside down, and looks at it in all ways that serve the coachee in experiencing it. The “aha” insight happens for the coachee. However, he may need some time, a long time sometimes to experience it. And sometimes the coach may find everything so obvious! Exactly in these moments, the coach knows more than ever he has to keep out of the way! He puts aside personal opinions, prejudices, pride, ego, judgments, and defensiveness, and just Is there at the place of love, understanding and compassion. Eventually the coachee integrates the change. And then the movements happen. The dance goes on.

It is all so simple, yet so powerful. Coach and coachee meet, create a relationship of confidentiality, trust, truthfulness, and openness and while dancing a transformation towards more love, fulfilment, balance, and understanding happens. The coach is the focus. The coach is holding the love. The beauty of all this is that the two of them are creating this unique magical place where they both can be their beautiful selves. Just dance!

ABOUT ZORNITSA STEFANOVA

Zornitsa Stefanova is a professional Life and Executive Coach, APC (IIC&M). She is passionate about coaching as a tool for transformational changes in people leading to more fulfilling, balanced, and meaningful life. She helps her clients in Bulgaria, USA, Spain, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, and Russia reach their personal potential, be even more successful as business and community leaders.

Zornitsa Stefanova

Coaching: Change the way you see, the way you feel, the way you live... the way you are. Co-Active Coaching in Bulgaiia, USA, Spain, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, and Russia. She helps her clients in Bulgaria, USA, Spain, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, and Russia reach their personal potential, be even more successful as business and community leaders. She is passionate about coaching as a tool for transformational changes in people leading to more fulfilling, balanced, and meaningful life. She helps her clients in Bulgaria, USA, Spain, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, and Russia reach their personal potential, be even more successful as business and community leaders.
Positive Psychology Health Coaching focuses on identifying health assets, building health promotion strategies and developing a positive mind-set around health and wellness. Furthermore, these interventions assist in reframing the traditional sickness role into a wellness model and shift clients towards optimal health.

Health and wellness coaches can be found in the fitness industry, large corporations and now in mainstream medicine. Indeed, these agents for change are making their mark and assisting people to transform unhealthy thoughts and behaviours into life-changing results.

Although there have been numerous efforts to battle the progression of chronic disease worldwide, the incidence continues to grow with no solution in sight. There is evidence that education alone is insufficient for people to change their health behaviours. There is a need for innovative creative solutions for the progression of chronic disease internationally. There is strong support to advance the science of health prevention and the most proactive version of positive health is the promotion of optimal health and sustaining supportive environments.

Health and wellness coaches utilise effective behavioural psychology principles to assist people to make lifestyle changes and become masters of their wellness. They are a perfect vehicle for change, trained or experienced in assisting people to transform their lives and exceed their goals in health and wellness. Adapting a varied approach, coaches shift the power to the client and encourage them to take responsibility for their health.

Positive psychologists deemed the term ‘PERMA’ which means the presence of positive emotion, the presence of engagement, the presence of meaning, the presence of good relationships, and the presence of accomplishment in one’s life.

In 1998 Martin Seligman, president of the American Psychological Association, put forward a new innovative theory focused on harnessing the good qualities about people and looking specifically about what in life brings us happiness. Positive psychology, as it was termed, has now been divided into distinct fields including Positive Health. Coaching and positive psychology informs one another and has many similarities. Positive psychology coaches have an in-depth knowledge of the research literature, assessments and interventions specific to this field of practice. Coaching provides a vehicle through which clients can explore the meaning, accomplishment and contribution in their lives.

Positive Psychology Health Coaching is almost solely about enabling our clients to focus on the positive meaning of the experience and focusing on what they are doing right for their health.

Various studies have outlined the effectiveness of positive emotion on both lymphatic functioning and cardiovascular health. Scientists consider harmonious or smooth heart rhythms, which are indicative of positive emotions, to be indicators of cardiovascular efficiency and nervous-system balance. Meaning in life has also predicted successful aging, greater well-being, and less psychopathology...

Positive Psychology Health Coaching by Natasha Old (Australia)

In 2009, leaders in health policy along with the Samueli Institute created a Wellness Initiative for the United States nation. They proposed creating thousands of Health and Wellness coaches to work in the communities to promote a ‘self-caring society’ to increase community wellness. Through supporting clients to initiate change, health and wellness coaches directly have an impact on the health industry, potentially effecting hospital turn over times and the recurrence of chronic illness.

There is a need to reframe this mindset through investigating what activities create higher levels of functioning and increased levels of health satisfaction. Research contests that our social relationships, our environment, and our concepts of personal meaning all directly influence on our health status.

It is impossible to foresee or predict how a coaching session will progress in any given situation and the best one can do is consider an approach that is steadfast and evidenced as effective in one’s own experience.

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Even prior to the emergence of the Positive psychology generation individuals were writing about the impacts of positive psychological states in physical health. Edwards and Cooper (1998) describe a positive psychological state as ‘any condition where the individual’s perceived state exceeds his or her desired state’.

The Angle – Coaching Methodology

Subjective well-being, as measured by optimism and other positive emotions, protects one from physical illness

The Process

Positive Health spawned from the Positive psychology movement

The Process

The Angle – Coaching Methodology

Objective well-being, as measured by optimism and other positive emotions, protects one from physical illness

The Process
It is imperative that the coach do some groundwork with the client during the first session to ensure they both have a clear understanding of the health goal and expectations from both parties. Assisting a client to recall past achievements reinforces a positive mindset. Likewise viewing previous failures as learning experiences builds resilience and demonstrates the ability to persevere in the face of difficulties. It is necessary to ascertain what a client believes is holding them back from already having the outcome they say they want coaches can assist clients to challenge internal and external perceived barriers such as attitudes, fears and limiting beliefs about themselves. Through coaching clients can gain insight about which belief patterns are at work and where else is this turning up in their lives. Through reframing these beliefs and initiating the start of a new mindset, clients experience hope and renewed confidence in the ability to create a more empowering process.

One of the biggest challenges for a client is compliance and taking full responsibility for their health. Moving into a new way of being certainly can create anxiety for clients as they become unsure about new roles they will have to play. It is paramount that the client understands that a steadfast level of commitment will be compulsory and that work will be required in order to meet their goals. It is likely that this will include the learning of new skills the client may not have previously been exposed to. A coach can use any number of positive psychology coaching interventions to help the client build self-confidence including positive acknowledgement, gratitude journal, and the Best Self Exercise. Have the client consider healthy interventions that bring about positive emotional states. Encourage the client to consider which strengths may need to be adapted in order to move confidently toward their goal. Suggest readings, movies, activities that will inform the client about themselves. For example a client may want to lose weight so they feel socially accepted by a group of peers, this is an extrinsic goal versus a client who wants to lose weight so they can feel good about themselves and move more freely. It is powerful to have the client consider what the life would be like and who they would be if they had that goal met. Our brains cannot decipher the difference between thoughts and reality and we can reproduce the same emotions though visualisation. Have the client authentically consider this goal and ensure that there is clarity and rationalisation behind their choice.

It is imperative that the coach do some groundwork with the client during the first session to ensure they both have a clear understanding of the health goal and expectations from both parties. Assisting a client to recall past achievements reinforces a positive mindset. Likewise viewing previous failures as learning experiences builds resilience and demonstrates the ability to persevere in the face of difficulties. It is necessary to ascertain what a client believes is holding them back from already having the outcome they say they want coaches can assist clients to challenge internal and external perceived barriers such as attitudes, fears and limiting beliefs about themselves. Through coaching clients can gain insight about which belief patterns are at work and where else is this turning up in their lives. Through reframing these beliefs and initiating the start of a new mindset, clients experience hope and renewed confidence in the ability to create a more empowering process.

When a client does the work on their beliefs around their achievement orientation they can gain insight into successes and failures from the past. Then the coach is in a position to investigate the client’s mindset and to further investigate thought processes they may be more empowering and consistent with goal success. It is important that the client is clear about their goal motivation and that the goal is made clear and measurable in order for it to be successful. Diener and Dean (2007) describe intrinsic goals as “those that are inherently satisfying…and extrinsic goals are those that are in anticipation of an external reward”. For example a client may want to lose weight so they feel socially accepted by a group of peers, this is an extrinsic goal versus a client who wants to lose weight so they can feel good about themselves and move more freely. It is powerful to have the client consider what the life would be like and who they would be if they had that goal met. Our brains cannot decipher the difference between thoughts and reality and we can reproduce the same emotions though visualisation. Have the client authentically consider this goal and ensure that there is clarity and rationalisation behind their choice.

One of the biggest concerns for people achieving goals is positive goal reinforcement and persevering. Neuroscientists have shown there is a clear link between low dopamine and perseverance. Likewise other studies have illustrated that positive emotions increased dopamine levels in the brain. Through having our clients focus on positive emotions there is a possibility that their perseverance may be strengthened.

The Goal

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To conclude Positive Psychology Health coaches are in a powerful position to work with individuals regarding Positive health interventions. Not only can coaches provide and positive growth mindset for their clients but a shift in the power relationship enables the client to be more empowered and feel in control of their health. As new evidence continues to be presented Positive Health Coaching strategies continue to flourish.

People desire well-being in its own right, and they desire it above and beyond the relief of their suffering… being in a state of optimal health is not merely being disorder free; rather it is the presence of flourishing.

Another suggestion based on a Health Promotion Campaign in Australia states ‘Swop it, don’t stop it’ whereby the client swops the disempowering thought or behaviour for an empowering option.

Self-awareness is paramount to the coach’s method and the continuous focus on the client progressing in a forward manner. It is vital that the coach is aware of their own opinions and attitudes and that these do not bias or affect the relationship. It is imperative that if the coach has doubts in their mind as to the client’s success that they address these. A client needs to know that the coach believes in their success and their ability to obtain their goal.

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Nature or Nurture
You Control the Switch!

by Katherine S. Egan (USA)

It seems like it’s getting more and more difficult these days to understand what to eat and how to live for optimal health. Each week there is a new study contradicting the one we heard about last month or last year. Is coffee good for you or not? How much exercise do we actually need? Am I drinking enough water? Should I take up meditation or yoga? Should I be eating gluten? Soy? Dairy? What about sugar? What’s the best diet; Atkins, Paleo, Anti-inflammatory, Raw Foods, Vegetarian, Vegan? Help!

Then there are terms thrown around like non-GMO, organic, pastured, grass-fed, wild-caught, etc. And different rules apply depending on where you happen to live on this planet. For example, there is a list of food items that are acceptable in the United States, but are banned in much of Europe. There are countries that do not allow genetically modified crops to be grown in their country but still import them.

How does one interpret this bombardment of mixed messages? How do you really know that the information you find on the Internet is accurate and not some marketing scam? Is the study you are reading, that says Genetically Modified foods are fine, actually coming from the company that has the most to gain from selling GM foods?

It can all be very confusing and frustrating. But, what if you discovered that Mother Nature made us perfect and even provided an on-off switch to let us control our future health? This ‘switch’ is an inherent programme in our body or DNA that has been revealed in a relatively new science called ‘epigenetics.’ It proves that although genetics may determine a part of our overall health, given the proper environment, our body can switch the bad genes off and turn the healing ones on.

So, how do we go about creating the health, vitality and energy we all deserve while keeping life simple?

Here are four key things that you can control today to improve your overall health and wellness:

1. Drink plenty of water
2. Eat the highest quality (whole) food you can afford
3. Move your body daily
4. Practise self-care

The truth is there is not one single answer; there is not one best diet. We humans are unique and have unique requirements, experiences, genetics and needs. We all have different definitions of what constitutes health and vitality. This is the concept of ‘bio-individuality’. What works to keep me healthy may not work for you. So, keep what resonates with you and leave the rest.

Water is critical. More than 60% of our bodies are composed of water, and the brain alone is comprised of more than 70%. So drink up! Women, aim for about 3 litres each day and men aim for 4 litres. Of course, balance that with body size, physical activity and geographical location. For example, if you live in an arid place or high altitude, or you work out a lot – drink more. The easiest way to tell if you are in-taking enough fluids is the colour of your urine. If it’s dark yellow or orange, you are nearing dehydration. It should be very light or clear in colour.

Then comes the question, bottled or tap? The truth is, there is no great answer for this and, of course, it depends on your geographical location. If you drink tap water, make sure you have a good filter that removes bacteria, heavy metals, and pharmaceuticals. In some areas of the world, you may be better off with bottled water, even given the downsides of plastic containers. There are some wonderful waters from natural sources such as springs and aquifers. Be wary, though as some bottled water is simply tap water that has been treated.

Food should be organic, local and seasonal. In some countries, there is no ‘organic certification’ like there is in the US, because there is no need to certify food as organic. If you are in one of those countries, consider yourself fortunate. If you are in the US – choose organic. Other terms to look for are non-GMO, grass-fed, wild-caught and pasture-raised. Organic produce such as springs and aquifers. Be wary, though as some bottled water is simply tap water that has been ‘treated.’

Food should be organic, local and seasonal. In some countries, there is no ‘organic certification’ like there is in the US, because there is no need to certify food as organic. If you are in one of those countries, consider yourself fortunate. If you are in the US – choose organic. Other terms to look for are non-GMO, grass-fed, wild-caught and pasture-raised. Organic produce has not been doused with pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, which wreak havoc with our hormone-managing endocrine system, should be consumed. In terms of animal proteins, organic means the animals were raised without antibiotics, steroids, and growth hormones, which you would be ingesting by default. Grass-fed cows and pastured animals have not eaten pesticide-laden or GM foods. They have lived a happy and stress-free life roaming freely and eating their natural diet.

You have most likely heard the saying, ‘you are what you eat.’ In today’s reality, we must take this one step further and think – you are what your food eats. This is true for both plants and animals. Your fruits and vegetables draw nutrients up from the soil. Thus, it’s not as simple as washing the outside of your produce. If you do not purchase organic, then there is ‘bad stuff’ inside as well. If you eat beef, understand this – a cow’s natural diet is grass. They have a four-part stomach ingeniously designed to digest the grasses they eat while sauntering about the countryside. When they are forced to eat a grain-based diet, their bodies don’t know how to process this and they end up sick, which invariably means they are given antibiotics. Then steroids and growth hormones make them stronger and fatter, faster. If you are eating conventionally farmed beef, you are therefore ingesting everything they’ve been injected with.
Eating seasonal and local foods means that the foods you consume are fresher and riper as they are picked at their peak and do not require long distances of transport. This helps both the environment as well as your local communities. Think about this: fruit and vegetables that are out of season must come from greater distances, meaning they were picked before ripening so they have fewer nutrients and as a result, less flavour. There is also a macrobiotic principle that focuses on creating balance in all things in life, within your body as well as your environment. Thus, when you eat local foods in season, you are in harmony with nature.

Physical activity is also important for the human body. This does not mean you have to go out and run a marathon! Pick something you truly enjoy doing and you are more likely to actually do it. Also, here is a great tip – remove the word exercise and replace it with activity. Does not that sound nicer? More fun? Just move your body and sweat a little. Every day. Simple!

Self-care means time to yourself, by yourself, and for yourself—in whatever way works for you and your particular lifestyle. It could be a massage, a walk in nature, taking time to read, journaling, meditation, fine wine, a nightly bath—the list is endless. It’s time alone just for you. We all have that never-ending list of things to do or manage or care for: spouse, kids, career, school, aging parents, groceries, housekeeping, etc. You get the picture. How do we fit it all in? By taking care of you first. It is important to plan time into your day just for you. Actually schedule ‘me-time’ into your calendar. This is not selfish! It’s an absolute must. Bottom line: you must take care of your body, your mind, and your spirit. These mean different things to people, so you need to figure out what this means for you. Then do it. In order to truly care for others you must first be well.

There are a handful of other things you can do to improve your overall health and wellness, such as ensuring you get enough sleep, minimising stress, having close personal relationships, practising some form of spirituality, and even cooking at home. The trick is to not tackle them all at once! Try one thing at a time for a couple of weeks and see how that goes. Then add another. It’s only through small incremental change that we can build long-lasting habits.

We are all born with DNA from our parents and ancestors, our genetic blueprint so to speak. Genetics does not, however, mean you are destined to get the same illnesses and conditions. There is also the ‘switch’ of epigenetics, meaning ‘upon’ your genetics. Epigenetics shows that things like diet, lifestyle, environment, relationships, physical activity, spirituality, home life, career, stress level, toxin exposure, and the decisions we make every day in relation to these have a larger influence on our overall health and wellness than many of us truly understand.

Think of your genetic blueprint as the foundation, not the final product. Your genes have the ability to be switched on or off or modified—depending on how you live your life. By following some of these steps, you can move towards better health and rediscover the energy and vitality you were born to enjoy.

### ABOUT KATHERINE S. EGAN

Katherine combines her experience as an internationally certified Holistic Health Coach and an MS in Professional and Technical Communications, and over 20 years of writing experience, with the goal of educating others. Individually, she helps clients rediscover their path toward optimal health to find what she calls ‘your extraordinary.’ Her love of writing and teaching can be discovered by reading her book Genetics Isn’t Everything: How to Make Your ‘G-E-N-E-S’ Fit You which delves into the fascinating field of self-healing and proves that genetics doesn’t have to determine your destiny. Contact Katherine today at www.geneticsisnteverything.com

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Let’s Meditate on Coaching
by Denisa Palii (Germany)

If I were to ask myself what is the link between ‘meditation’ and ‘coaching’, I would reply ‘everything’ – like a thread leading to a needle.

The feelings that you get during meditation – ‘inner balance’, ‘joy’, ‘inner silence’ are key. When ‘feeling nothing’ and ‘thinking nothing’ is achieved – ‘feeling present’, ‘feeling like yourself’ comes up, ‘being there’ truly awakens and all you need to do is watch: watch your feelings coming up in the session, watch your mind trying to cripple in some thoughts taking you from non-judgmental awareness to full judgment and paradigms.

Meditation is key. Putting yourself in that ‘nothingness’ state in which you are there for your client, ‘you know you know nothing’, and as a newborn child, you freshly listen and watch as if just born in this world and with full curiosity you put your good energy to use. The benefits come there – when ‘being’, ‘loving’, listening with full open heart and truly connecting with your client happen there.

What would I ask myself more?! Well, how does one enlighten his being, how does one awaken his ‘potential’, how does one transcend what he is and connect with is ‘inner’/ ‘superior’ /’better’ self/version?! If not through connecting with himself, if not through asking himself ‘Who am I?’ and going to all that this means.

What else? Some more?! How about ‘beingness’? How many of us are truly present, are truly there – full heart and spirit?! How many are truly ‘empty-headed’, ‘new born childlike’ in dealing with clients, ready to give our free mental space for them to get ‘enlightened’, for them to ‘figure out their minds, their hearts and spirit’, their ‘true core desires, values, aspirations’? How many really do that?

How many really know deep inside their guts ‘people feel each others’ and without even knowing, just by ‘being there’ coaching starts to happen. Coaching is a powerful process, it’s true - yet how do we become really true coaches, how do we connect to our deeper being and truly make is happen? What if ‘just being there’ for one another is the key to achieve it?!

‘Despite all its popularity, today very few of us truly know what meditation really is. Some regard meditation as the mental concentration on something, others consider that we meditate when we imagine something that gives us peace and satisfaction. All these methods are being with one goal – to slow down and, eventually, completely stop the incessant activity of our minds. These exercises are not really meditating – they are substitutes for meditation because it is normally very difficult to stop our minds all-together. In reality, meditation is a state of thoughtless awareness. It is not an act of doing – it is a state of awareness. We either are in this state or we are not, regardless of what we are doing in life.

Truly, a man can be in meditation while doing his day’s labours as another man can be very far from meditation, while sitting in a lotus posture on the top of a mountain.’

Reference:
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Is Health a Matter of Living our Full Potential?
How ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ Affect our Health
by Tessa Richter (Switzerland)

Growing up, most of us learn that we are either healthy or sick. And when we are sick, we usually treat the illness on a physical level, with medication, therapy or surgery. We rarely think of our work, our attitude towards life or towards others and ourselves, as being a possible cause of illness. Over the course of many years, I have come to realise that health has another, more hidden aspect: it is connected to us living our true potential as human beings, based on who we are.

Our potential is rather like a muscle: if we don’t use it, it shrivels and its energy goes stale. This affects our mental and physical health, leading to anxiety, lack of energy and motivation, but also to more serious diseases.

Each one of us is a unique instrument of creation, defined by our background, perception and talents. Often, we use only those aspects that are acceptable to the norm and people around us, beginning with our families and schools. We thus cut off and deprive ourselves of a great potential and energy that can be decisive in creating what matters to us.

A young man, around the age of 30, came to me for career coaching. His doctor had diagnosed burnout. He was not yet at the stage of not being able to work at all, but he was off work regularly, generally lacking energy, and unable to breathe properly. Because he also wanted to change careers, but didn’t know what exactly he wanted to do next, and how to go about it, he was referred to me by a friend.

What I did in the first session was to create a space of acceptance and trust. The issues that had led to his burnout were openly acknowledged, addressed and taken seriously. This is what I call “loving who you are”.

During the course of our next sessions, we went on to explore what his strengths are, his values, what kind of environment helps him create success in his life. Once this has become clearer, we can proceed to find a suitable environment, type of work, activities to do. I’d like to add that this process continues for as long as we live. New potential can be developed at any age. And once we have activated hitherto unknown strengths, there are new ones to be discovered.

I’d like to use an image to illustrate: if we were a plant, a tree, we would first need to find out what kind of a plant this is, what it needs in terms of water, light, soil etc. What is the right environment to plant it in, where it can thrive and produce fruit. This fruit, in turn, can nourish many people surrounding it. If we plant it in the wrong soil, feed it too much or not enough water etc., it will ultimately die. Now, we usually do this for plants, why not for us human beings?

Taking a first next step to create something that matters in our lives, is the key to unfolding our hidden potential. In the case of my young client, through exploring who he was, and what he liked doing, we found that in his work, up to that point, he had always liked coaching, teaching others, helping them to do a better job of selling. As a sales person he had also done some sales trainings. He enjoyed inspiring his colleagues, which quickly brought us to thinking about a career move, from sales to training.

The most obvious next step was to look into further education for him to become a trainer, but we also remained open to other options. During this time, he activated his network inside his company, and someone came up with the idea of doing a kind of ‘taster day’ in the department he wanted to work in, i.e. in training. On that day, he did a really good job there, met lovely people he liked, and who liked him. Unfortunately, they did not have a job for him at the time.

The process of finding his next step was not linear. He continued looking for other options and applying for jobs in other companies, but kept his desire to work in that training department alive. And, in spite of all his doubts, crises and uncertainties, after a year, he was exactly where he wanted to be. He had managed to change jobs, and was now working in the training department of the same company he had worked for before, in sales. When I saw him, a few months later, he was very happy – and just as important: he was completely restored in his health and revitalised. How did our coaching help? My job as a coach was to believe in his future, and in his secret potential, to enable him to feel courage and strength, and to support him in stepping outside his current comfort zone. Where necessary, I was also able to help with practicalities, connecting him with others, using my network, adapting his CV, etc. He could have done all of these things on his own, but he may well have given up along the way.

Besides more traditional tools, we used music and meditation techniques to help him relax. Relaxing is a key element in opening up to new possibilities, to life. It’s rather like trying to fill more water into a full glass: you can only do it if you empty it first. If it’s full it will overflow. The same is true for us.

We also used pictures to visualise his inner vision, and to gauge what point of implementing his vision he was in. On a more practical level, we redid his CV to match his goal. And last, but not least, I held the space for him to believe a major change of career and lifestyle was possible, until...
he trusted himself, and life, to make this move. He wanted more than anything to change his life, but he was also very much afraid. This is true for many people. We grow to feel secure in what we’ve built, even if it’s no longer valid and no longer makes sense.

Making changes in our approach to life, in what we do professionally, or in our attitude to ourselves, has a profound impact on us, and on our health. I have come to realize, both in working with clients, and in my own life, that there are 3 basics, and one overriding principle.

The basics are:
- Know yourself -
- Love who you are -
- and Create what matters.

If you are lacking just one of these three, you may well get sick, as I experienced myself a few years ago. In my case the missing link was loving myself.

I had always followed my passion, first in music, becoming a professional musician, then as a visual artist, painting and sculpting. I was successful in both, having followed my inner calling. I had “known myself” and “created what mattered” most to me. And yet, I had fallen seriously ill, which made me question my values and Create what matters.

Learning to love myself started about four years ago, and I doubt it will end before this life is over. There is always more to learn. It has led me to a completely new life, coaching business people. This was not a plan I made, but something that came about by co-operating with life as it presented itself to me at the time. But that is another story...

This brings me to the underlying essential principle I have discovered: we co-create our lives with life as our partner, and we will be most successful, happy and healthy if we learn to co-operate with life as it is, rather than imposing our wishes, or ignoring what life is offering us. We need to start exactly where we are, with life as it is and under the existing conditions. No use waiting till everything is the way we think it should be. Conditions will never be right for us to do what we most want to do.

On the other hand, life has a way of presenting us with many opportunities, which we often miss, due to our narrow focus on what we want, what we think is possible or necessary, and on how things should be. If we open up to realise that life is here to support us, and that it has endless highly creative ways of helping us get to where we want to go, we can notice opportunities that will take us to places we could never have dreamed of.

In the case of my client, it was life that presented the perfect answer, one we would never have come up. By co-operating and seizing the opportunity it was giving him, he managed to get exactly where he wanted to go – a place that life first made him experience.

Coming back from work that night, Elena felt very unsettled by a remark from her boss. ‘This report is not good enough, you should rework it and I need it by tomorrow afternoon.’ She felt frustrated and angry; she had already spent two full days revising the document and numerous evenings thinking about it. It seemed as if she could never meet his high standards. Tiredness and powerlessness overtook her. She wanted to quit her job then and there. All her investment in the last 5 years did not generate the recognition she expected. Was it really worth it? She reviewed the gains: a good salary, bonuses, perks, a comfortable environment, nice colleagues, but at what price?

She suddenly realised how much the involvement around her job had overtaken a lot of areas in her life. She thought about it while exercising at the gym, on errands or cooking a meal, even at night after putting her children to bed. Actually, she felt guilty not thinking about it.

After much thought, she decided to inform her boss that her report would no longer be modified. She felt torn between her anger and her fear of being fired. Which could have the worse long-term consequences; ignoring her work/life balance or going against her boss’ expectations? She made the decision, then and there, that at forty years old she was going to choose more balance, and trust that she was competent to find another job, if necessary.

She had heard about hiring a coach. She always thought herself to be perfectly capable of handling issues, taking into account her excellent education and a spotless professional track record. For the first time in her life, it dawned on her that she might need help, from someone who could provide a different perspective to her situation.

Elena got a reference from a friend, called and was able to have an appointment within the week. She knew very little about what she was looking for but was open to explore new perspectives.
During the first meeting, after mutual introductions and relating her request, she was asked a strange question: “why had it been important to continuously comply, even when it felt irrational?” The first answer that came to mind was: ‘because I have no choice- he is my boss’. When the question was repeated she realised she was afraid of saying no, for fear of losing her job. When the question was asked again for other areas in her life, she realised she was always trying to comply with other’s wishes, denying herself and her need for time and energy. Fear was at the centre of her actions: fear of being rejected and fear of not being good enough. And if only she could meet everybody’s need, everything would be all right. But it was not working anymore. So what was there to be done about it?

The coach asked her to sit upright with her feet grounded, to close her eyes, and take several deep breaths. After these breaths, she was asked to feel the tensions located in different parts of her body and just accept them without trying to get rid of them. Strangely, simply the acceptance of the tensions in her neck, the knot in her stomach was enough to have the muscles relax, and after a while she felt calm and relaxed.

Next, she was introduced to the concept of acceptance as a way to unlock a situation. She first had to accept her own powerlessness in meeting her boss’s perfection standards. Accept that she was stuck in the belief of needing to meet everyone’s need. Accept feeling the fear of being rejected in her stomach.

Going through this process of accepting her feelings, her beliefs, her shortcomings, a strange thing started to happen. The more she accepted these thoughts and feelings, the calmer she became. As if deep inside herself she felt heard and understood. She was allowing herself to be imperfect, meeting her limitations, just in that moment. After a while, just breathing and accepting whatever was there, letting go of all thoughts, she reached a calm place, where she could rest for the first time in her life. Nothing was required of her, she could just ‘be’. ‘Being’ in this place gave her a sense of fullness as if time had stopped. In that state she did not have to prove or defend herself or act or do anything. She was enough ‘being’.

Then she was asked to sit in another chair to look at herself from a different perspective. From a different angle, she realised she had a choice, that rejection and fear had been just thoughts, old beliefs she had built her life on. Accepting what she felt and thought in the present moment was a gateway to something else, a freedom to go beyond her fear and explore what she really wanted to do instead of meeting someone else’s desire. Choosing from a place of quiet where she had access to all her resources, she could make different choices.

To reach that state she needed to practice daily, stilling her thoughts by focusing on the tensions and feelings in her body, accepting whatever was present and coming to a place of quiet and fullness.

After several similar sessions with her coach, Elena reconnected with her ability of managing expectations from a place other than fear. She was able to set her limits and choose where to put her energy to be more effective. Taking very small steps, one day at a time, she became quickly more aware of her fears without being led by them. It also meant meeting her shadow, befriending and accepting all the different parts of her that did not meet her standard of perfection.

In the course of this process, she noticed that acceptance of one’s shortcomings had a different impact than feeling guilty about them and judging herself. Accepting one’s limitations gave her more power to negotiate. She was less afraid of “losing”, she felt more whole and issues did not have the same impact as before. Which made her more successful in her professional and personal life.

Elena realised the importance of taking time each day to quiet herself, raising awareness of the tensions in her body, allowing her emotions to be heard. Accepting whatever was present in her, without judgement, as well as the world around her. She was able to start her day much grounded, with inner quiet and even joy in some days. For the first time she found her inner ‘home’.

About Catherine Wuillaume

Catherine Wuillaume is a coach in mindfulness with more than 25 years of experience in corporations as an internal and external coach both in the USA and Europe. Today she helps leaders, managers and individuals from both continents, along the journey of finding inner peace and joy.
Key Lifestyle Habits to Upgrade Your Life

by Cristina Burca (Romania)

Follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be.

- Joseph Campbell, famous mythologist

• How often do you hear your inner voice telling you this?
• How often does your support network tell you this?
• How can holistic coaching support you to achieve this?

If any of these questions spark a light in your mind/heart, keep reading, as we talk with Jo Ritchie (JR), London-based Personal and Business Coach, who tells us what 3 key lifestyle habits each of us can integrate to upgrade our lives. Jo has an impressive and varied background so can draw on many different tools to help support her coaching clients. She credits her ethos to Joseph Campbell’s concept of ‘Follow Your Bliss’ and also makes use of Susan Jeffers’ concept of ‘Feel the fear and do it anyway’. Enjoy reading and check the gift Jo offers at the end of this article!

For me, it is about people’s capacity to change the way they think and to therefore make great changes in their lives, because we truly create our world in our minds first. I have a science background and my previous career was in medical/healthcare communications. I am, therefore, somebody who likes to understand the mechanisms behind things. Reading the research into neuroplasticity (the brain’s ability to change itself), studying applied neuroscience and psychology lights me up because it proves to me that the structure of our brains is not ‘hardwired’, but that the development of our neural pathways can actively be changed by us. That is amazing! We are fully in control of our minds and, therefore, our behaviours and our lives! This is why coaching works so well and why it’s such a rewarding vocation. I know what it feels like to take control and transform your life because I have done it myself. I am living proof that it CAN be done. To be able to pass this on to others and to know that it works fills me with a sense of passion and purpose.

CB: Follow your Bliss & Face the Fear – two concepts that you integrated into your coaching practice. Let’s take each of them briefly and see how they support people in their daily struggles.

CB: What coaching methods do you use to support people having a fulfilled, mindful and joyful life?

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CB: What coaching methods do you use to support people having a fulfilled, mindful and joyful life?

Of course, in the path of following our bliss, one thing that can set us back and give us doubts is our fear. This is where the second concept comes in – of facing our fears in order to get the life that is meant for us. This is summed up in the phrase by Susan Jeffers, author of the book by the same name, “Feel the fear and do it anyway®”. A great attitude to live with, as we know that fear is not going to go away, in fact, it’s an important self-preservation mechanism, but it doesn’t have to stop us in our tracks. I taught workshops as a Licenced Trainer for the Susan Jeffers Organisation for many years and constantly learn so much about how facing fear and stepping out of our comfort zone helps us to grow. Whilst I generally have a supportive and a listening coaching style, I do challenge clients to step up and stretch themselves to achieve things they previously didn’t think possible – and always with great results.

I truly believe that people are AMAZING and capable of great things – particularly given the support and accountability a coach can provide. Bearing in mind these two concepts, almost as mantras, can be hugely beneficial and help guide your decisions on a daily basis. You can ask yourself if what you are considering will bring you more bliss or if you are just doing something because you feel you ‘should’. Then, when fears inevitably arise, it is important to recognise them as just fears and to remind yourself do something that scares you a little every day in order to grow as a person.

Jo Ritchie

Image provided by author

Cristina Burca (CB): Hello Jo and thank you for your time! Let’s kick off with some insights about yourself. What is it about coaching that you are passionate about and what drove you to become a coach?
I am very lucky that I have many different areas to be able to draw on here from my training and experience – including psychology, coaching theory and practice, neuroscience, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), mindfulness training and even yoga, martial arts and breathwork. There is such a broad range of tools available to support people in having a fulfilled, mindful and joyful life that it would take forever to list them all, but I have suggested my top three most effective habit changes below.

CB: What are your top 3 Lifestyle Habits that you encourage people to develop, in order to live holistically, in line with their values and mission?

1. ‘Know yourself and be yourself’ – embrace your uniqueness – learn about what makes you tick and then accept all parts of yourself. You are unique and have strengths that nobody else has. Comparing yourself to others is a recipe for disaster. Louise Hays’ ‘mirror work’ is a great tool for self-acceptance and learning to love everything you are. Write your mission and learn to recognise your value, so that you can behave in a way that is in alignment with these.

2. ‘Choose an attitude of gratitude’, as this will bring more things into your life to be grateful for. Make a conscious choice to choose the way you want to feel every morning when you wake. Start a gratitude diary right now – just 3 things every morning that you are thankful for. Then watch your life change! Gratitude is like an antidote to our problems. It’s not about feeling grateful once we have what we think we want, but instead choosing to be grateful for all that we have right now.

3. ‘Be present and live in this moment’. The past is gone and cannot be changed. The future does not exist, so it would be crazy to worry about something that may never happen. The only time we really have is right now and it’s the only time when we can affect change in our lives. Really be here, physically, mentally and emotionally. Value every moment and also realise that being present with somebody, giving them your full attention in the here and now, is one of the most powerful and caring things you can do.

 ABOUT CRISTINA BURCA
Cristina has contributed to the iCN magazine since 2014, by interviewing coaches around the world to shed a light in this fascinating personal and professional development field. Cristina worked as journalist in Romania (2006-2008) and then moved to Brussels to work in EU affairs. After an international journey in PR, education and tourism, taking her from Germany to Malaysia and back to Europe, she is now managing the brand of a renowned business and life coach in Romania.

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Coaching with Positive Psychology and Personal Knowledge
by Janette Young (United Kingdom)

Why is the science of positivity important for coaching? Positive psychology is a new paradigm of psychology that has emerged in recent years. The positive psychologists will claim that focusing on the positive improves flourishing. The focus on positivity within coaching helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem in the client. Added to this, there are many interweaving threads between positivity, leadership and coaching styles and knowledge creation. Whilst coaching emerges in many shapes and forms, the focus on the positive can only enhance the client-coach relationship. As such the focus on self-esteem and nourishing brings out the best in people through human development.

At the beginning of the 21st century Seligman made it his mission to found the new scientific movement of ‘positive psychology’. Seligman argued that previously psychology had unwittingly adopted a disease model, concerning itself primarily with alleviating human suffering. However, precious little scientific research was devoted to discovering how to call forth what makes life worth living (Fredrickson 2009). The science of positive psychology is rooted in scientific evidence and is the study of positive emotion; engagement and meaning; positive accomplishments and good relationships (Seligman cited in Fredrickson). Positivity depends upon how you think. In my own work on know-how in personal knowledge creation I also discuss positive and negative thoughts and their impact on the individual from a knowledge creation perspective. Observing your own thoughts is the first step to redesigning your future (Young 2012). Awareness of thoughts is a first step process in of creation knowledge at the cognitive level of socialised knowledge. All knowledge starts at the individual level. Encouraging clients to observe and assess their self-talk as part of personal capital can be worthwhile and insightful and becomes a tool for working on those limiting beliefs that stop clients moving forward.

In positivity a key way to increase your positivity ratio is to find positive meaning more frequently within your daily life. Another idea is to find the good within the good in order to turn something positive into something even more positive. Savour goodness; count your blessings; acts of kindness; follow your passion; positively dreaming about your future; apply your strengths; heartfelt sincerity. Connect with others and nature and open your mind and heart are just some of the factors that Barbara Fredrickson puts forward as ways to increase your positive outlook. The question to ask is: Are you a positive psychologist? Are you aware that you are already using positive psychology?

In particular at various stages in the coaching process it is wise for coaches to focus on the positive when working with clients. If the mood or discussion wavers into the negative when trying to create the vision for the future, then it is important to recognise this and take the client towards a more positive place. A positive approach enables the client to visualise their future in all its glory, and thus this helps the coach to understand the big picture in the long term as they tune into the clients vision. Positivity links to well-being and is recognised as a therapeutic approach to encourage change.

Using positivity in all forms of coaching builds self-esteem. Added to this, as stressed a positive mental attitude is imperative in personal knowledge creation. As such, a focus on the following points may make best use of these techniques when dealing with clients.

- Become aware of your clients mood. Tip over into positive when appropriate.
- Focus on positive dreaming about the future. Visualise your future success in detail. Visualising increases brain activity.
- Focus on where the client finds meaning. Meanings are interpretations the sense you make of your current circumstances. Increase positivity by finding meaning in daily activities.
- Show acts of kindness and gratitude. Counting kindness interventions helps people to flourish.

Reference:

ABOUT JANETTE YOUNG
A Simple Life Matters
Being Present with Oneself
by Gary Gasaway (USA)

A simple life consists of an interconnection within as well as the outside world. Unfortunately, many of us live our lives full of self-imposed barriers that seem to prevent us from experiencing even just the simple things in life.


How much of your time is spent worrying and not having balance in your life? Many of us worry about things that are not within our control. When we worry too much, we lose touch with life and all the wonderful things life has to offer. In other words – stop worrying, start living!

Dealing with daily adversities is hard for anyone, but if we learn to recognise life’s difficulties with a new attitude of ‘start living’ we can respond to life with a different set of eyes that look for opportunities to just simply – live.

To start living simply, you must think balance, embrace contentment, and be completely interconnected with oneself. Contentment matters for a peaceful soul. Having thoughts and feelings of simplicity is being comfortable and relaxed with your life. For everything to matter, contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel contentment will allow you to savour each moment as it unfolds to allow your heart to feel.

Why it matters to a ... simple life
This topic of simply present matters because without pausing for all things in life, you will miss some of the significant events that happen to you, and more importantly – in you. Being present isn’t always easy, but if you are focused, you will not miss any special moments. A simple life is to experience it to its fullest and if you don’t pause for the moment, it will pass you by.

Life is made up of a series of events – some more valued than others, but don’t miss a one! The level of importance in this case does not matter, it is a life experience just the same. When you simply take the time to be fully aware all things – in the moment – you will discover balance and connect with self.

How Far Behind is Your Soul?
by Catriona Futter (UK)

Here’s a curious question – how is your soul? And when was the last time you stopped and paid attention to the state of your soul?

We are all too aware that we live in a fast-paced, constantly moving world, where technology allows us to be ‘on’ and available every hour of the day, should we so choose. Expectations – both internal and external, real and perceived - can propel us into seeking to achieve more, be more visible in our work, be successful. In Coaching for health, wellbeing, and life balance, we often focus on enabling clients to identify and live according to their values, to prioritise the important over the urgent, to make choices that facilitate authentic, fulfilled lives. But is there integrity in how we live our own lives, make our own choices?

Let me tell you my own paraphrase of a tale I came across recently. A Westerner, with a first world, 21st century mentality, was travelling through a distant land with native tribesmen on a work project. For several days, there was rapid progress, much distance covered, and many of the Westerner’s boxes were ticked – they were making good progress, goals were being achieved, it was busy and productive.

And then the tribesmen stopped. For no stated reason. And nothing happened. Nothing obvious was being done. The Westerner became frustrated with this lack of progress, this waste of time, this enforced waiting. His timetable was slipping and he was not meeting his agenda. Eventually, standing it no longer, he asked the reason for the delay. The answer stopped him short – ‘We had been moving too fast and had to wait for our souls to catch up.’

The tale is attributed variously to South African, African or Inca tribesmen, or Himalayan Sherpas. It matters not a jot. Living in our modern, First world, we all have a tendency to move too fast, tempted to fill our days with endless to-do lists, tasks, work commitments, stuff, stuff, stuff. None of that is wrong. But how often do we take

ABOUT GARY R. GASAWAY

Gary is an author, keynote speaker, trainer, and a certified professional life coach. As a retired manager from Southern California Edison, Gary used his natural talent for coaching and became a “corporate coach.” He has previously published: The Coach’s Chronicles – A Journey Through Life’s Trials and Triumphs and The Coach’s Chronicles II – It’s Your Story! Start Writing it! Gary’s third book: The Coach’s Chronicles III – Everything Matters, was released in January 2018.

Gary has a Bachelor of Science degree in Organisational Management and a Master of Science in Leadership and Management. Gary is the founder and owner of Conflict Coaching Solutions.
Time spent on regular reflection and renewal is not only time well spent, but time essential to allow us to bring the best of ourselves to our clients, especially as we seek to encourage their own self-development. Take a minute with me to stop and look inside yourself. Where is your soul currently? Is it far behind your tired and weary body, and running to catch up? But, I hear you say, how can we possibly fit in time for soul care amongst the many complex demands of work, life, family? It is too daunting and costly, neither realistic nor achievable. However, I would beg to ask, what is the cost of running too far in front of our souls all the time, of not letting our souls rest?

I believe that just as we nourish our bodies with varying quantities of food depending on the circumstances, so too there are layers of nourishment available for our souls. Sometimes we grab a quick snack on the run as a short term energy tops up. Most days we have a sit-down meal which affords greater sustenance but still requires daily repetition. And holidays and celebrations afford us full blown feasts that satisfy and restore.

So too it is possible with soul rest: for example, regular ‘snacks’ of five minutes mindful breathing throughout the day; a larger ‘meal’ of a brisk 20-minute walk outside or a conversation with a good friend, or a creative pursuit twice a week; a sumptuous ‘feast’ of a half-day retreat monthly that lifts you off the conveyor belt entirely and allows you to refocus on vision, priorities, values and reconnect with all that matters most.

Recognising your need is the first step, knowing yourself and how you rest, without comparison to others, is the second. And then creating and sticking to a plan – again, we know this in theory, but how we struggle to implement this in practice?

Take those morsels of time throughout the day to remind yourself that you are not perfect, nor are you indispensable, but you are precious and unique and have much to offer to this world, simply by being you.

This, of course, is a process. A daily choice. Our bodies are often moving too fast, and drastic changes to this way of living may not be possible or realistic for now. But learning to lay down the guilt and instead take the time needed to allow our souls to catch up can enable us to sustain the pace, and model balanced, values-based living to our clients.
Many Want it, Few Accomplish it
Let’s Talk Inner Balance
by Alice Thomson (UK)

Does the Swedish word LAGOM, representing a concept of ‘just enough’. Not too little, not too much. When I first heard about it, I thought: so.....BALANCE. After all, balance is about finding the middle ground.

Lagom is not very common these days, especially in the Western world. Despite the fact there has been a lot of talk about balance in general, in recent years, it seems to be a rare occurrence in our lives. Modern society, driven by progress doesn’t inspire looking within oneself. Unfortunately, the more we observed the outside, the more we are driven by it; and the more we allow it to happen, the more power the outside has over our lives (what we focus on gets a hold of us). The only way to get back into a driver’s seat is by claiming back that power. We do that by making a decision about living consciously and intentionally. That approach, allows us to redesign our life’s blueprint and to focus on what really matters, which brings us to inner balance.

What is it really? To answer that question, allow me first to tell you what it’s like when the balance is non-existent. Starting with mental health issues and deterioration of our bodies, through problems at work and at home, to unhappy relationships and overall feeling of dissatisfaction and/or disappointment with one’s life; all of the above, are the results of a lack of balance. People often underestimate the power of our inner experience and the consequences of that attitude are the feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, despair, unhappiness and, what can be described as, walking on a shaky ground. When the balance is gone, nothing feels solid and secure anymore and it’s because, it is the balance that gives us the ability to maintain peace within.

The balance does not come from a perfect life or lack of problems, balance is what allows us to handle life.

There is no one, universally agreed on definition of Inner Balance (please do not mistake it for life balance or work/life balance) but, I like to describe it as maintained proportional stability between three aspects of a human existence: the mind, the body (or the physical aspect of life) and the spirit (or energy if you prefer). The reason why so few people accomplish it, is because we tend to focus on one of these aspects and, to lose ourselves in it. The best examples of it can be found, these days, in the ever-growing community of spiritual people.

Leading a spiritually abundant life is a wonderful experience and one that is needed for the Inner Balance, I say this as someone who has been on a journey for the last 16 years however, troubles begin, when spirituality becomes the sole focus of life. The problem with this approach, is that it takes us from one extreme to the other and, along the way, yet again, the balance is being lost.
The answer lies in 3 steps:

**STEP #1**
We start, with working on our self-awareness. The subject I rant about endlessly and, for a very good reason. Self-awareness is one of the least developed qualities in people, these days, and, the one we need the most. It is what allows us to recognise our strengths, work on destructive patterns and, most importantly, really get to know and understand ourselves. The aspect I put a lot of attention to, when working with my clients. Reason being, we cannot possibly find a purpose in life, our calling or joy, without knowing ourselves. By extension, if we don’t understand ourselves, how could be possibly understand and balance the relationship between different aspects of our lives?

**STEP #2**
Step 2, of our journey, is growth. Constant self-development, must become a second nature to us; and frankly, if self-awareness work is well on its way, it is not something that needs to be pushed for but, rather something that should not be suppressed. Finding answers to questions, that arise on our self-awareness journey, is the way to start. They will open the doors to the places and subject we have not previously seen, or even heard of. The trick to self-development is, to walk through those doors and continue going as the new ones open.

**STEP #3**
Which brings me to the step 3, where the sustainability of inner balance begins. I am talking about consistency in the determination or daily habits, if you prefer. Our everyday routine is what determines our long-term success. Inner Balance, is something that, requires a constant maintenance and therefore a commitment. That’s the reason why so many of us are on the rollercoaster relationship with it. Our daily plan seldom includes an intentional work on it; and to succeed, we must think of it as we think of brushing teeth or shaving. White pearls and smooth skin last for a bit and, then we need to repeat the action of brushing and shaving to maintain the desired effect. The same applies to Inner Balance. We look within ourselves, we ask questions, we pursue the answers; and we repeat the process. We live consciously. Remember, one can never be too self-aware or too developed.

Inner balance is something we all ought to strive for. It is a one kind of balance that affects all the order. It comes from within and radiates outward, affecting everything in its way. It is a bliss that brings peace and joy into our lives, making them desirable. It is represented by restful sleep, healthy body, positive and fulfilling relationships, calm approach to challenge and change and, a peaceful, relaxed mind. For anyone, who wishes to live a happy and fulfilling existence, accomplishing and maintaining of the Inner Balance ought to be the ultimate goal, the focal point of life and, the measure of personal success.

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So how do we get there? What is the answer to establishing inner balance and, most importantly, how do we maintain it, once accomplished?

Coaching can create the most unlikely inspirational stories and outcomes. Take the case of Ashley (Ash) Gordon & Brian Tregunna, for example.

Ash is a 30 year old Iraq war veteran who lives in Dorset, UK, whilst Brian is a former Fire Chief who lives in Cornwall, UK, and is closer to the national state pension age than he would like to admit. So how did two people from such diverse backgrounds and geographical locations come together to co-write a compelling new book about how Ash has recovered from the trauma of conflict to help other people turn their sometimes difficult and emotional lives around?

The full story is explained in their acclaimed self-help life coaching book, ‘A Life Now Worth Living’, but here’s a brief outline providing the inside story on how it all come about, including some previously unpublished details.

When Ash completed his boyhood dream of joining the British Army, he had no idea of what lay ahead or the consequences for his mental health and wellbeing. He was sent to Iraq just five days after his 18th birthday and completed two tours of the conflict zone while still a teenager. Unfortunately, that left Ash with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which initially was undiagnosed and had a devastating effect upon his life.

Ash said, “It was my childhood dream to join the Army and I was very proud of my service. But I did not realise the damaging effect it would have upon my life. I ended up in a very bad place mentally. I felt like I’d gone to hell and back. I only managed to drag myself out of a deep black hole when I learnt to let go, take action and move on. Now I would like to share the details of the life-changing steps I took so that I can help others who may also be suffering.”
After Ash left the army, he fell into a deep spiral of negativity that included dealing with a lot of anger, drinking large amounts of alcohol and constantly seeking conflict; which, unfortunately, he found all too often, much to his personal cost. He was not in a good place mentally and was pushed right to ‘the edge’ before he had one of those experiences that can be described either as fate, luck or intervention by a greater power, saved it. Although he was clearly nervous, his courage, honesty and enthusiasm shone through and he completed his speech to rapturous applause.

As his confidence and self-esteem grew, Ash took on more responsibility. He studied and gained a formal training qualification, spoke at more public events and accepted a full-time job helping other people to improve their lives. Many of the people he helped, achieved significant progress and improved their lives. Who knows where that will take me in the future.

Perhaps the final words should rest with Ash, who says, ‘My personal journey continues. I really do have ‘A Life Now Worth Living’. I want to keep learning, see how much I can grow and at the same time help other people with the right steps.’

‘I’m very proud of Ash for tackling the extremely tough issues he was faced with and then becoming a shining example for others to follow,’ said Brian. ‘There’s no doubt that he was in a very bad way when I first met him, but now he has got his life in order and spends a lot of his time helping people in need. He’s living proof that recovery from very difficult circumstances is possible if you take the right steps.’

Ash’s thirst for knowledge grew even stronger and another major step forward occurred when he studied NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) Coaching in the USA. Qualifying as a Master Practitioner led to Ash starting his own coaching business, ‘Personal Breakthrough Solutions’, which has enabled him to help even more people.

‘I wouldn’t even have heard of renowned authors like Viktor Frankl and Stephen Covey if it hadn’t been for Brian,’ Ash admitted. ‘Learning about various coaching models and personal development principles was life-changing. It raised my self-awareness, lit-up my imagination and inspired me to change my life.

Ash’s mental wellbeing steadily improved as he not only learned a range of important coaching principles, but also applied those new skills to his everyday life. It wasn’t easy, of course, but Ash persevered and made some difficult decisions that brought about positive, lasting improvement.

‘I first new that something special was happening with Ash when he spoke at an important volunteering event in Wiltshire,’ remembers Brian. ‘He captivated the large audience with his explanation of how volunteering (with Active Plus) had not only changed his life, but literally saved it. Although he was clearly nervous, his courage, honesty and enthusiasm shone through and he completed his speech to rapturous applause.’

As his confidence and self-esteem grew, Ash took on more responsibility. He studied and gained a formal training qualification, spoke at more public events and accepted a full-time job helping other people to improve their lives. Many of the people he helped, achieved significant progress with their lives; most improved their mental wellbeing, many gained employment and some even started their own businesses.

A Life Now Worth Living is available from local bookstores and online, in print and e-book versions for £9.95.

Ash is a well-qualified trainer of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Time Line TherapyTM, Hypnotherapy & NLP Coaching with considerable experience of empowering other people to improve their lives through his own company, Personal Breakthrough Solutions.

Further information on Ash and the services he provides can be found on his website or Facebook page.

Contact no. 07544273540
Email: ashplus@outlook.com

Brian Tregunna

Brian is a highly acclaimed Coach, Trainer and Leader. He has his own Coaching and Personal Development company, TLC, working with organisations, groups and individuals to achieve high performance through bespoke coaching, training, mentoring and personal development.

Further information and contact details are available on Brian’s website.

Contact no. 07856571163
Email: tregunnalifecoaching@gmail.com
6 Ways Naikan can Totally Transform Your Life in the Most Simple Manner

+6 Ways to Incorporate Nai in Coaching

by Cristina Maria Cojocariu (Romania)

One of the biggest problems in our modern and civilised society, so much focused on establishing connections, lies, ironically, in our lack of connection. With all the speed ahead, we get more and more separated at a profound level from people in general, from friends, from family and the saddest of all, from ourselves.

We are so eager to shift from one objective to the other, from one thing to the other, from one emotion to the other, that we forget to give ourselves time. We lack time to observe, time to feel, time to process. Afterward, it seems like the most predictable outcome that our depression, our anxieties, our loneliness, our sadness reach higher peaks than we would have ever imagined.

Naikan is an old Japanese art of introspection, initially developed in the 40’s by Ishin Yoshimoto. Its inspiration was to be found in the Buddhist practice. The basis of Naikan consists of 3 very simple questions. Yet, exactly, these simple questions can be our gate - openers to all the trauma and “garbage” we have worked so much to cover and sweep under the rug. The word itself - “Naikan” - means “to look inside”.

Why should you use Naikan in coaching / self-coaching?

1. It’s simple and easy to implement in your daily life - anyone can do it.
2. It shifts and enriches your perception of things and situations easily.
3. It does not need so much time to put into practice.
4. The results are exponential as compared to the time/energy you invest in it.
5. Makes you see things from perspectives you won’t have ever thought about.

You, as a coach, have one more advantage than the persons you work with, which can prove itself to be an important added value: the ability to encourage and give support to your client to explore areas which might seem frightening at a first glance, to make a step and yet another step outside of their comfort zone.

The recommendation is to spend 20-30 minutes of total presence in our practice, out of which minimum 60% of the time to be dedicated to the 3rd and most uncomfortable question. The most important thing to take into account is the fact that the spotlight is on our own actions, not on what other people might or might not do. This way, we have the best chance to be entirely responsible for our own lives, our own decisions and our own choices. We realise, if we did not do that before, or if we forgot, that our reality is our creation. We are not victims, but on the contrary - we are our own almighty heroes.

How is it used nowadays

In Japan, the technique is used in psychotherapy, for treating depression and addictions. In Europe, the technique is looked at as something at the border between therapy and spirituality.

There are also countries in Europe (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Spain) which use Naikan successfully in specialised clinics and not only (even some prisons started to use the system), in order to treat drug and alcohol addictions, to offer a deeper insight in one’s mind and higher self, to treat depression.

Naikan should also be in the USA. One of the greatest miracles of Naikan is the fact that we can take huge advantages on a daily basis, without having to leave our own home or office.

Why are the questions we use in Naikan?

Naikan consists of 3 main questions, applicable in a wide range of circumstances.

1. ‘What have I received from...?’ (person/situation)
   Ex.: My husband prepared my breakfast. / Somebody smiled to me. / A friend called me.

2. ‘What have I offered to...?’ (a specific person, situation or the general overview of a period of time)
   Ex: Did I smile? / Did I encourage someone today? / Did I help someone?

3. ‘What troubles and difficulties did I cause today to...?’ (myself, other people, animals, objects)
   Ex: I didn’t eat healthily, so I troubled my body... / I killed a spider instead of getting it out of the house. / I wasted food, / I ignored someone who needed my attention.

The 3rd question is the hardest to answer, as you will probably not have ever thought about it during your “travel” here, on Earth.

What are the options/situations to use Naikan? You can use Naikan (for yourself or with your clients) to analyse and understand at a deeper level:

1. A day of your lives (you can have or advice your clients to have a Naikan journal)
2. Significant events in your life (perceived either as positive or negative)
3. Relationships with significant people in our lives (in our past or present)
4. Any situation which needs more clarity
5. A certain period of time (week/month/year)
6. Our interaction with an object or certain parts of our body

6 ways / additional exercises to incorporate Naikan in your life

1. Spend an hour reflecting on the previous year/month of your life.
   • What were the most important gifts you have received?
   • Who made it possible?
   • How would have been your life if this would not have had been present in your life?

2. Work on your relationships (starting with parents, partner and other significant persons which crossed your path during your “travel” here, on Earth)
   Most of our trauma starts from childhood, so this is one of the most important areas to start our journey in order to heal our inner self. For working with parents or other close relatives, start with the first 9 years of your life, and then 3 year chunks. For a romantic partner analysis, if we talk about a long time, use periods of 1 year. The aim is to get an answer to: “What more can I do to express my gratitude and appreciation for this person?”

3. Daily Naikan, with gratitude
   After you finish your daily Naikan entry, as specified above, send a thank you note/give a thank you call to someone who made your day better (restaurant, car service, parents - the list could be endless, should you choose to).

Source:

One of your greatest accomplishments
Answer the 3 base questions of Naikan. Look closely at all the love and support and help you were given during all that time. Try to imagine how would your life had turned up, hadn’t had been this help.

The objects you use on a daily basis
We take for granted our car, house, refrigerator and forget the miraculous presents we receive all the time. Take this day to observe your cup of coffee, your bathtub, your plates. In the evening, prepare a list of all the efforts some people made so we can have a comfortable life (from growing a plant to manufacturing and delivering a product). Imagine how much more complicated your life would have been lacking all these improvements.

A specific ‘Thank you’
For the next 3 days, thank everyone for the help they offer you, even the small little details. Be specific: ‘Thank you for preparing me my coffee. / Thank you for being so calm in all these situations.’ Behaving like this will keep us more aware and more present in here and now.

Restrictions on using Naikan
Naikan is not suitable for people who are not able to make a clear distinction between the facts and the imagination (we are talking about persons suffering from perception disorders, psychosis, dementia).

Conclusion
We are all interconnected - humans, animals, plants, objects, whether we see it or not. ‘It is the joy, appreciation, and gratitude that often attract people to Naikan. We see how much we have received from life. We see the countless ways we have been loved and cared for. Despite our failures, life has not failed us. In spite of our mistakes, reality has supported us.’

‘Gregg Krech

Through Naikan, we obtain an unimaginable image on life, on the surroundings. We get to be amazed by all the wonders that are in our life, at a closer or wider distance. We receive the fabulous chance to understand and feel as part of the World more than ever before.

We, as coaches, have the privilege to share this and make the difference in people’s lives.

How do we make a difference?
One of the ways we remain committed is to continue sourcing and developing relevant benefits because we understand the importance of receiving a return on your investment.

Therefore, we offer access to discounted products and services, educational information and opportunities that will help you and your business to grow.

Networking partners

Source:
The No.1 Magazine for Life and Business Coaching

www.International-coaching-news.net