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## This is life-changing work'

Life coach helps clients focus on discovering

November 15, 2006

I have to admit I was leery about talking to a complete stranger on the phone for 45 minutes. We weren't talking about the weather, either. No, she wanted me to find my deepest inner feelings and desires -- and reveal them. OK, I said. I'm a comedian who wants to be a singer, a journalist who wants to write fiction.

In a calm and soothing voice, she led me through a series of mental exercises to center my thoughts. She gave me permission to let go of all my stress and land in the area of my heart. "Imagine connecting with all the wisdom inside of you. Allow yourself to listen to simple intentions."

She asked me to name two areas of my life I'd like to change or improve. Health and money, I said. By now you may have guessed I was talking to a life coach, one of the hottest trends in self-help these days. Executive coaches have been around for quite a while helping the business crowd get big bonuses and move their family photos into the corner office.

» Click to enlarge image



Life coach Deborah Leoni-Willhite: "Life coaching deals with the future and is action-oriented."

courtesy photo

But now, people who simply want more out of life, or a different life, are seeking the services of life coaches such as Deborah Leoni-Willhite, Geneva, who I talked to for a free, 45-minute sample session. When she told me she has clients all around the country, it suddenly made sense that life coaches typically huddle-up on the phone with their clients.

Because her home and office is right here, though, I visited her in person for a few minutes after our telephone consultation. Dressed all in black and wearing an angel pin on her T-neck, I found her to be as calm and caring in person as she is on the phone.

Why the angel? "I'm an angel," she said. "I consider myself a very spiritual person with intuitive feelings. I also offer spiritual companionship. It's not action-oriented like life coaching. It's more

of a presence, often with people in grief, giving them an opportunity to discover who God is for them."

Leoni-Willhite, who became a life coach two years ago after studying with the Ford Institute of Integrated Coaching and becoming certified -- life coaches are not licensed -- said the first thing people ask is what's the difference between a life coach and a therapist. "Therapy deals with the past. Life coaching deals with the future and is action-oriented. The ideal client is one who has had therapy in the past.

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"This is life-changing work," she said. One client who changed her life with Leoni-Willhite's coaching was a dermatologist. "She was from Podunk, Indiana. She was bored and uninspired. I got her to step out of the box and discover what she was really passionate about. Now she's a yoga instructor and studying Buddhism in Tucson. I held her accountable and really kicked her butt."

The dermatologist made a major and dramatic change, but what's dramatic for one person might not be for another, such as sharing true feelings with a spouse, said Leoni-Willhite.

A personal fitness trainer for 15 years, Leoni-Willhite continues to offer that service in her home through her company called, get this, Tighter Assets. Obviously the woman has a sense of humor. "There is a wholeness in what I promote, of body, mind and spirit." She is also a certified leadership coach.

Leoni Willhite, whose clients typically find her through word of mouth referrals, offers the 45-minute sample session free to anyone. A four-month program of 16 one-hour sessions cost \$125 per hour. A single session, often used by former clients wanting a tune-up, is \$150. Family coaching is \$150 per session. "Six people on a speaker phone can be a real challenge," said Leoni Willhite. Contact her at (630) 845-2439; Web site: [insightout-life coaching.com](http://insightout-life coaching.com).

Not everyone is coachable, but I was, said Leoni-Willhite. "It's about unlocking new beliefs. Discipline is the key to freedom."

All right then. When the going gets tough the tough get going. I can make money writing fiction. I can make money writing fiction. It was a dark and stormy night . . .

*Know someone who would be an interesting subject for Slice of Life? Please e-mail suggestions to [paulsullivantravels@yahoo.com](mailto:paulsullivantravels@yahoo.com) with a short description of the person, your name and how you can be reached.*

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