

# Your ENERGY makeover

Are there strategies that work better than a holiday to restore vitality? Three women who were running on empty tell Melanie Whitehouse what happened when they went to see three very different fatigue-busting experts



## LOIS'S FATIGUE FACTORS

Depressed at turning 40 and with a feeling of being stuck in a rut with no way out, plus work problems

## “Life coaching gave me a lift”

Business consultant Lois Ellett, 41, is married to Stephen Pawson, 44, a sound engineer. They have no children and live in Brighton, Sussex

### Lois's story

**“I couldn't identify with being 40 at all and began to feel depressed. Stressed out after having spent two years studying for an MBA and having no social life, I couldn't see where my future lay and was in a rut. It culminated in a total lack of energy. I'd lie on the sofa watching the TV for hours every night and not remember a thing I'd seen. I couldn't even get around to decorating our flat and all it needed was painting. Motivation is closely related to energy, I now realise.**

Stephen and I got married 13 years ago, but he's very grounded and it isn't his style to talk about things that may seem ethereal. I needed someone professional to help me see the wood for the trees and rediscover my vitality.

I'd looked at self-help books on life coaching but needed something personal to me. In May 2002, I decided to search the Internet for a life coach. Marianne Craig's name came up and she sounded professional, wise and not too airy-fairy. She used terminology like the “Myers-Briggs Personality Type”, which I'd encountered before as a tool for management. In life coaching it helps to understand why you behave in certain ways and what your needs are.

I sent Marianne an e-mail and she e-mailed back immediately to set up a telephone session, which is free. We discussed the process and she gave me some things to

think about, such as looking at my "tolerations" – things I was tolerating in my life rather than enjoying. It was cathartic and made me put into words things that are difficult to articulate.

The second session was face to face. When I met Marianne I realised that although she was a bit over 40, she had an interesting career and was glamorous and trendy. She was a good role model for someone like me who saw 40 as the start of a downhill slide. Life coaching isn't about someone telling you what to do nor is it like talking to a friend. Instead, by asking the right questions, she got me to come up with answers, which enabled me to decide on changes I could make.

I drew up a treasure map of my life – all the things I wanted it to be like represented by images and how I wanted to look and feel. It was good for setting short and long term goals and finding my values.

I learned to take control of my life by revising my finances, which showed I was spending too much – blowing money on luxury items I didn't need like cosmetics and cigarettes, while never seeming to have any money to do up the flat or go on holiday. It also gave me the courage to go self-employed – something I'd been thinking about as my marketing job was changing and I felt trapped and frustrated.

Marianne saw me through the transitional period when I was setting up my business, which was a difficult and challenging time because I had a lot of decisions to make. There were five face-to-face sessions in the three months

I saw her and our weekly sessions were mostly on the phone, but I could e-mail her in between. Before I left my last job I remember e-mailing her saying I'd had a good meeting with my MD and that I hadn't smoked for a week. It was fantastic to have that moral support.

I paid £175 a month (now it's £240 per month for three sessions) but I felt it was £525 well spent because I would never have made those changes without help. Life coaching released my energy because it got rid of the blocks that were holding me back. Now I'm in control of my destiny, whereas before I was letting circumstances control me. It's very empowering, which makes me feel more energised, mentally and physically – more positive and productive.

The life coaching process also helps you find out what's important to you and gives you the courage to act on it. For instance, I'd always loved music but hadn't done any since I was a child. My new-found energy has led to me taking up the mandolin. I'm also painting in oils and drawing in ink instead of mindlessly watching the telly every night – and I've given up smoking! I felt physically lighter after my sessions and I'll definitely go for top-ups if I ever get confused again."

**"Now I am in control of my destiny; before I was letting circumstances control me"**

## THE LIFE COACH'S VERDICT

Marianne Craig

Lois contacted me feeling low in energy and at a crossroads in her life. It's very common to find that milestone birthdays, whether you're turning 30 or 60, spark a desire for change. I sent her my coaching pack to complete. This includes questions such as, "What do you enjoy doing that gives you energy?" I also asked her to list ten "tolerations" in her life; write me a short life history highlighting the highs and lows of her life; and take a personality profile assessment. We agreed on goals that she wanted to reach and planned for a new career, found a simpler lifestyle and improved her self-confidence through locking on to her values and purposes in life.

My part in the process was to listen, encourage and challenge Lois. Before each coaching session, Lois sent me her progress form, detailing what she had accomplished and what opportunities and challenges

were facing her. We then established how to do less of what was not working and more of what was.

Lois's homework included doing a financial balance sheet, making savings, clearing clutter from her home, increasing her exercise and healthy eating and cutting down on smoking. The effect of this work was a significant increase in energy. We also took time to uncover Lois's personal values. Her number one core value is "creativity".

An important next step was for Lois and I to explore her career options. It soon became clear that she wanted to set up her own business as a marketing consultant. She has done this very successfully, discovering her entrepreneurial spirit and enjoying the freedom of being freelance and the opportunity to express her creativity. Doing what she enjoys and playing to her strengths has boosted her confidence and levels of fulfilment tremendously.

Coaching is a very powerful process but only successful if the client is willing to take responsibility and make life changes. It was a joy to work with Lois, who embraced coaching and was willing to do what it took to get her life on track. >>

## Try it yourself...

- As a starting point, Marianne suggests making a list of ten things that are draining you of energy and set about correcting them yourself; taking exercise to increase your serotonin levels, which will boost your energy; asking yourself, "Am I fulfilled in my life" or talking it through with a friend; and, finally, writing down the things you enjoy doing that give you energy – and doing more of them.
- To find a trained and accredited life coach in your area, contact the International Coach Federation. Call 0870-751 8823, e-mail [info@coachfederation.org.uk](mailto:info@coachfederation.org.uk) or visit the website at [www.coachfederation.org.uk](http://www.coachfederation.org.uk).
- Costs vary considerably but start from around £200 per month, depending on where you live.
- If you would like to know more about life coach sessions, contact personal and professional coach Marianne Craig by e-mailing [marianne@coachlifeandcareer.com](mailto:marianne@coachlifeandcareer.com) or visit the website at [www.coachlifeandcareer.com](http://www.coachlifeandcareer.com).