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Cusick works with clients to visualize positive future

By Meghan Muldowney

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Some of the world's most powerful people have depended on the advice and mentoring of life coaches, from CEOs of Fortune 500 companies to President Barack Obama.

However, according to Connie Cusick, a life coach residing in Fairfield, anyone can benefit from the guidance of a coach.

Cusick herself was inspired when a life coach, Denise Davis, came into her mother's life.

"She became my mentor coach," said Cusick, who is originally from Indiana. "She pushes me to set goals and then I have to be accountable to her. She believes in me."

Life coaching is not the same thing as therapy, however.

"Life coaching is based on positive psychology, taking your strengths and going with them, instead of taking all your bad things and trying to fix them," Cusick said.

There is also an emphasis on the present and future with life coaching, instead of the past.

"You're 100 percent responsible for where you are. If you're complaining about your job or the situation you're in, well, do something about it," said Cusick.

In Fairfield County, it has been difficult to escape negativity relating to the economic downturn, job cuts and hard times for many businesses.

"I think [the stress] is worse in Fairfield County.

But even at the worst, there is so much potential. People are smart; this is one of the best places in the country to achieve things," she said.

Cusick will be teaching two classes in Darien: "Launch Your Life" and "Creativity Workshop" at Middlesex Middle School.

In the "Launch Your Life" class, which will be held on Jan. 26 and April 22 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Cusick will help participants set goals for the future, whether they be personal or business-related goals. Students can brainstorm and bounce ideas off each other, a dynamic that Cusick says is very beneficial.

"The workshops are great because you can interact with other people, you can get other inspirations," she explained. "When you say things out loud in a workshop, it becomes real for people. All the workshops have just been so positive."

Her "Creativity Workshop," held on April 1 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., will focus on using visualization to achieve one's goals. Cusick referenced a Harvard study where students who visualized a project ahead of time completed the task with 100 percent accuracy. Those who didn't visualize in advance had an accuracy rate of just 55 percent.

In the workshop, students will make a "vision board" of positive images representing places they want to go in their future, photos of loved ones or inspirational quotes. Participants can cut out things from magazines or bring items from home.

"My favorite thing to do is inspire women to get a business going or find creativity," said Cusick. "My true passion, my true focus, is inspiring and helping women all the time. I love to motivate people."

Life coaching is not all about dramatic changes, which may seem intimidating. Instead, even the smallest changes can have a big impact.

Getting rid of clutter, for example, may be overwhelming at first, but in the long run, will help to decrease stress and increase order in a person's life.

Cusick offers advice to improve one's lifestyle: "You notice 60 to 100 things before you walk out the door [each morning] that weigh on you," she said.

These can vary from small things such as a button missing from a coat, no hot water in the shower or the coffee maker being broken. These inconveniences alone may not seem such a big deal, but when they add up, can put a person in a bad mood first thing in the morning.

"You write [some of those things] down, and then you try to knock out as many of them as you can," she said.

Even the questions a person asks in his or her day-to-day conversations with people can negatively impact a relationship.

"They teach you in life coaching never to ask, 'Why?' because it's so accusatory," said Cusick. "Ask instead, 'What made you choose to do that?' Those little things can make such a difference."

Cusick is no stranger to running her own business, as she does now with Define Yourself Coaching. She has also run an antique business called Brown Bumblebee and created her own line of jewelry called Notting Hill Designs, which has been sold in Henri Bendel.

"This is America, where you can do anything. People have so much talent, they're just afraid to bring it out," said Cusick. "Life coaching is about bringing out the best in you, bringing out the positive elements and going forward."

One of her goals for the future is to write an inspirational life coaching book.

"I love to hear people's stories," said Cusick. "I've lived it and I know that it works, that's why I think I'm so passionate."

Those interested in signing up for one of Cusick's classes can register at <http://darien.continuinged.com> or visit her Web site, www.defineyourselfcoaching.com.

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