

Sometimes all it takes is a motivator and mentor to give you the focus and propulsion you need to achieve your goals, writes **Kristie Kellahan**.



A life COACH FOR ALL ages

WE ASKED **FOUR** TOP LIFE COACHES for their tips on achieving the best success for women in their **30s, 40s, 50s** and **60s**.



Have you ever felt stuck, unsure of the steps you need to take to achieve your career and life goals? Maybe you're frustrated because you aren't clear on what you want those goals or direction to be. A life coach might be the answer you need.

One of the fastest growing service industries in Australia, life coaching assists clients to clarify their goals, work out what is holding them back, blast through obstacles and procrastination, and step into new levels of success. Using a variety of self-development tools and techniques, life coaches work one-on-one with clients in person, over the telephone or via Skype.

Coaches serve a different purpose than psychologists or counsellors. Coaches are future-focused, helping clients get from where they are today to where they want to be. Just as a sports coach guides athletes to achieve their personal best, life coaches are behind their clients all the way towards a fulfilling, successful and prosperous life. Think of them also as cheerleaders, providing impartial support and encouragement: they are there to cheer you on. Therapists, in contrast, will often look to the past to understand why you are the way you are today.

The first thing a life coach will help clients with is determining their goals and the direction they want to be heading so that they don't drift aimlessly through life. A singular focus can be incredibly powerful. Goals and priorities change at various ages and life stages, and coaches are experts at pinpointing where their clients' focus needs to be.



Life coaching for the 30-something woman

The decade spanning a woman's 30s is the perfect time to get to know yourself so you can make the best and most informed decisions to move your life forward, says Shannah Kennedy, executive life strategist and an ICA advanced coach.

Shannah, author of *Simplify, Structure, Succeed, The Practical Toolkit for Modern Life* (shannahkennedy.com), says that what you do in your 30s can have a big impact on your 40s and beyond. "In the 30s, you want to challenge yourself, grow and evolve consciously," she says. "With money it is about starting to respect it, own it, like it and make it work for you. The 30s is about saving, investing and developing your career. You should be starting to work for the business called YOU, INC. by treating your finances as the business you work for."

Many women in their 30s seek out coaches because they aren't clear on who they are and what they want out of life. Shannah hired a life coach when she was 29 and suffering chronic fatigue syndrome: she says it changed her life.

"Having a coach assists you with planning and prioritising," Shannah says. "With a coach you build your own toolkit of life skills."

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40

Life coaching for the 40-something woman

"Many women in their 40s naturally start reprioritising and asking questions such as, 'Am I really happy doing what I'm doing?' and 'How can I add more meaning to my life?'," notes Linda Murray of Athena Coaching.

"From my experience coaching female entrepreneurs and executives, the 40s are a great time to check in with what really lights you up," Linda says. "It can be helpful to ask yourself, 'When I am feeling at my best, what am I doing and how can I incorporate more of that into my daily life?'"

Linda says coaching can help women identify their strengths and values (there are two free profiling tools on the Resources page of athenacoaching.com.au). The next step is to identify areas of life that are out of alignment with your core values. "When we live and work in alignment with our strengths and values, life becomes meaningful, fulfilling and has a sense that you're swimming downstream."

For many women, the 40s is also a time to consider a major career change. "Those feelings of restlessness are not a mid-life crisis, they're the opportunity for a mid-life reinvention," Linda says. "Do your research, make sure you have a plan in place, including financially gearing yourself for the change to minimise the pressure, then be brave and take the leap."

50

Life coaching for the 50-something woman

The 50s is a decade when the pressure is on to redefine who you are and what your role is, according to Fiona Craig from True Balance Coaching (lifebalancecoach.com.au).

"There's often an empty-nest syndrome as the kids start to go off to high school and university and mums realise the parent/child dynamic is changing," Fiona says. "When children are younger they need more hands-on supervision, and as they grow they require less of that, so mothers will often find they have more time for themselves."

That time can be spent on starting a small business, Fiona says. "Women in their 50s tend to value a healthy work/life balance and one of the best ways to achieve that is through operating a small business on your own terms," she says. "For many people, this may be the fulfilment of a long-held dream."

Fiona offers a Back to Balance package of three coaching sessions. She says the highly effective process includes creating a vision, setting goals, looking at what is holding you back, removing those barriers and ultimately moving forward. "I'm all about supporting the authentic self so you can live your best life," she says.

60

Life coaching for the 60-something woman

Women in their 60s tend to look back to reflect on what they have achieved, and look forward to consider what their legacy will be. Chrissy Richman from The Life Change People (thelifechangepeople.com) says it's an ideal time for women to work with a coach to take stock of their lives.

"The answer to the question, 'What have I achieved?', is often 'Loads' but women in particular tend not to recognise their achievements," she says. "These achievements may include earning money for many years to support a family, as well as supporting both partner and children emotionally and physically."

Chrissy says that anyone in their 60s who is feeling dissatisfied can often find fulfilment by sharing their knowledge and wisdom with others. "The best legacy that people can leave is the knowledge they have gained over the years about living a productive and happy life," she says. "A grown-up gap year is a great opportunity to travel (or stay close to home) and mentor others, such as young parents or those suffering from illness and bereavement."

The 60s can also be the time to turn hobbies into a source of financial gain. Chrissy has coached clients in selling their own paintings, photography and crafts. "You may not feel ready run a website, so eBay and Etsy are good places to start selling."

WOMEN TEND NOT TO RECOGNISE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS



The ABC of NLP

NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

(NLP) is a method or attitude for creating change, popular with many life coaches and psychologists. NLP is a process that explores the connection between how we think (neuro), how we communicate those thoughts (linguistic) and our patterns of behaviour (programming). Think of it as a user's manual for the brain.

Experts say that learning NLP techniques enables clients to improve the quality of their lives because it shows them how to communicate more effectively with themselves and with others. Through working with an NLP-trained coach, clients learn how to model and replicate excellent behaviours and skills. For example, someone who is terrified of public speaking could learn to model the behaviour of a confident public speaker. Using one of many NLP techniques, the phobic person could relearn their reaction to the spotlight so that it immediately begins to emulate that of the limelight-lover. ■

Finding the right **COACH** for you

In Australia, the life coaching industry is not regulated. People offering their services as a coach may have extensive training and qualifications, or they may have none. It's a service industry on the rise, with the International Coach Federation (ICF) listing about 1350 members throughout Australia and New Zealand. Many more unlicensed coaches offer their services in areas as diverse as pre-natal coaching,

divorce coaching, weight loss and personal finance coaching.

Start with an internet search for coaches who specialise in the topic you need help with (for example, goal-setting, work/life balance). Look for coaches who have undergone training at reputable institutions such as ICF or the Life Coaching Institute of Australia to earn qualifications such as Certificate IV in Life Coaching and

Diploma of Life Coaching. Ask for testimonials, and check online for complaints. Many coaches offer a one-hour free trial session.

Shannah Kennedy says hiring a coach is like hiring a personal trainer. Each one is very different, so you need to talk to a few to find the one who fits your personality and style. "You need to be working with someone who inspires you and motivates you," she says.



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