The Benefits of life coaching for those of us who work in dance

Having worked as a freelance arts manager, career development and company development consultant in the arts for the past 14 years, I have recently retrained as a life coach, helping people to focus on and achieve a balanced life.

As an artist, manager or promoter, it is very easy to solely focus on the development of our work and/or careers, often at the sacrifice of our relationships, health, wealth and general sense of well-being.

Having burnt-out at the age of 23, when I worked at Adzido Dance Company, I became more acutely aware than most of the dangers points of over-committing to work. It still took me at least another ten years to redress the balance and like a diet, it is something that I have to regularly go back to and check that the scales have not tipped.

Perhaps the problem starts when a dancer trains. We become highly motivated, self-disciplined and target-oriented people, who have extremely high expectations of others and ourselves. I would also say that this is true of most managers and promoters that I know. I believe that we then get locked into this cycle in our 20s, when we are constantly trying to prove to ourselves and others that we can do the job. By our 30s, some of us accept that we have served our apprenticeship but strive to maintain our professional reputation.

Personally, before making the decision, and working towards my goal to move home and business to Plymouth, I knew that I was jeopardising my relationships with friends, family and myself. I had health, weight and confidence issues, which thanks to Triniy and Susanna, a nutritionalist and a chiropractor, seem to be slipping away. I feel younger, fitter, healthier and happier than I ever have.

More recently, within the past 12 months, as a result of funding decisions with regard to my long-term clients, I had to take a long hard look at my personal values and what I now considered to be my areas of interest within my work. Both of these had changed considerably within the past four years as a direct result of my various personal and professional experiences. I then realised that I had transferable skills but that it was my responsibility to recognise and nurture them into a new career. This has been challenging and at times scary, particularly launching a new business, when you have been relatively successful for the past 15 years in your existing one. However, it is probably the best thing that I have done for myself in years. Oh yes, you heard correctly, I am doing it for myself and not for anybody else. Well, of course, I am still offering a service to people, but I will no longer be required to become emotionally involved. Of course, I am going to still work in the Arts and continue to support artists but on my terms and at my pace.

Here is a quick test: The Life Chart

Circle the appropriate number between 1 and 10 with regard to how you feel about each area of your life, at this point in time:

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<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual/religious life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/career</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal relationships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family/extended family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends/social life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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Are you happy with this balance?

If you are, then it is important to spend time and energy maintaining this balance.

If not, then you can harness the self-discipline and motivation that you use in your work to help you set personal goals that are achievable, enabling you to live the balanced life that you dream of.

If this sounds selfish, please be assured that even the smallest changes or shifts of behaviour can actually improve your personal relationships, confidence issues and benefit your career. Any investment in you through the choices that you make will benefit you and all around you – it is definitely a win, win situation!

So, you can either grab yourself a copy of the many life coaching books on sale that tell you how to change your life in 1 month, 2 weeks, 1 week and even 48 hours or start working with a Life Coach.

As an artist, manager or promoter, the more balanced you are, the more creative and productive you will be, responding proactively rather than reactively to the dance world, whilst living in the real world.

‘Working within the dance world, it becomes very difficult to step back and look at the direction of both personal and professional lives. Life Coaching begins the process of allowing you to view your life and address issues that over time have become subconscious and bring them to the surface. The support (given by June, as my life coach) has enabled me to explore certain areas of my life that for too long have been dormant; these changes in personal behaviour have led to larger positive repercussions both in personal and professional thoughts and decisions. It has been an invaluable process for me and a method that I will continually refer to at many points throughout my future life.’

Sud Basu, Acting Theatre Manager, The Place, London

‘Trying to balance a career as a dancer as well as a freelance dance manager alongside having a life outside of dance can be near impossible. Meeting with June as a life coach helped me to feel like I own my life as opposed to it owning me. Simple changes in thought process and approach have resulted in a world of difference throughout all facets of my life.’

Jessica Andrews, Freelance Dancer and Dance Manager

June Gamble, freelance arts manager, qualified Life Coach, Development Coordinator for Sankalpa and Tour Coordinator for Niki McCroton. She also delivers training for IDMN, Dance South West and The Place Artist Development.

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