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Certified Life Coach

Laisha is a Certified Ontological Life Coach and has successfully practiced in the personal growth industry for the past 20 years. With a corporate background in marketing, sales and office management and a BA in Education, she offers compassionate perspectives and refined observations to help others help themselves. As a Life Coach, Laisha has helped hundreds of women over the years, including teachers, computer specialists, artists, writers, teens, home-makers and seniors.

She is a companion to those who struggle with life's challenges and long for a new approach to attain a better quality of life. Laisha helps women access their inherent gifts within, get clear about their life purpose and or business vision...and then keep them focused until it is achieved.

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Contact Laisha for a sample coaching session:

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Solutions *for* Women

FROM LAISHA KNEIVEN

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ASPIRATIONS AND LIFE TRANSITIONS

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Sabbaticals for Everyone

There was a time when the word "sabbatical" was associated with professors taking a year off from their teaching duties to do research or write a book.

Today, sabbaticals are for everyone: overworked service providers, stressed out entrepreneurs—just about anyone with the ingenuity to make it happen. The time off may help you find intellectual and spiritual renewal, allow you to transition to a new career, re-energize you for the work you already do or give you more time to bond with your family.

In *Escape 101: Sabbaticals Made Simple*, Dan Clements and Tara Gignac tell us, "Your sabbatical is about living deliberately.... It's about unlocking the part of you that you know is still there, but may have been afraid to acknowledge."

What Kind of Sabbatical Would You Like?

Get clear about what you really want to do with your time off, and plan well so you get all you desire from it.

Creative pursuits. Is it time to finally write that long-contemplated novel or take up the piano?

Travel & adventure. How about a 3,000-mile bike trip across the U.S. or walking the Pacific Crest Trail?

Educational. You might study French cuisine in Paris or Spanish poets in Guadalajara. Or stay home and pursue a new field of learning at your local college.

Spiritual. Perhaps it's an inner journey you're after, a time of solitude, reflection and rejuvenation more easily found by camping out in the desert.

Contribution. Volunteering for a group like Habitat for Humanity could be a life-changing form of service.

Clearing the clutter. Is the backlog of clutter overwhelming you? How about catching up on the undone projects at home?

Personal health. Maybe it's time to deal with overdue health issues or get a handle on your diet and exercise.

The Big Buts

In *Six Months Off—How to Plan, Negotiate, and Take the Break You Need Without Burning Bridges or Going Broke*, Hope Dlugozima, James Scott and David Sharp identify the "Big Buts" that typically stop people from taking a sabbatical and offer ways to overcome them.

Money. Get employers to foot the bill, find grants or fellowships, save money beforehand, and minimize or eliminate monthly expenses.

Time. Give up a bonus in exchange for a chunk of time off and/or plan your sabbatical to coincide with a slow business period or career crossroads.

Objections from family and coworkers. Involve your family in sabbatical planning and be willing to compromise. Minimize the extra work coworkers fear taking on during your absence.

Getting out of your comfort zone, courageously overcoming obstacles, honoring the parts of yourself that need attention, and having new experiences are all sure to be highly rewarding and life-changing! ●

Top 10 Ways to Improve Your Environment

Our surroundings play an important role in how we feel and, consequently, how we behave in all realms of our life. Here are 10 ways to make your environment support the best you.

- 1. De-clutter.** Do *whatever it takes* to bring order to your space. Clutter is the enemy of clarity and relaxation.
- 2. Add flowers/plants.** Living things help clean the air and clear the brain. Be sure to keep them fresh!
- 3. Keep relationships clear.** Unresolved conflict with relatives or workmates can poison the best spaces.
- 4. Eat healthfully.** What you put in your mouth has a profound effect on your energy and mood.
- 5. Take "mental health" breaks.** Take a quick walk outside, do some stretching, or sit quietly and

breathe. Doing so regularly can do wonders for your state of mind.

6. Get inspired. Hang artwork you love, light candles, bathe your walls in color. Whatever keeps your spirits up and your life moving forward.

7. Set up systems. Whether it's a system for laundry, bookkeeping or taking phone messages, systems save time and help everything run smoothly.

8. Work on you. Develop yourself, and your environment can't help but improve.

9. Exercise. Everything feels and goes better when you're getting regular exercise.

10. Use humor. A little laughter goes a long way to create a positive, supportive environment. ●

Self-Quiz Do You Give It All Away?

Most of us have been taught that it is nobler to give than to receive. While giving can be a wonderful, heart-warming experience, giving too much of our time and energy can be detrimental to both our physical and emotional health, leading to anxiety, overwhelm and burnout. Take this quiz to see if you are giving it all away.

True False

- 1. I force myself to do things even when I don't have the energy to do them.
- 2. I ignore my body's "no" signals when I think someone's needs are greater than mine.
- 3. I hate conflict, so I'll do whatever it takes to avoid it, which often means doing something I don't want to do.
- 4. I feel obligated to answer the phone when it rings even when I really don't want to.
- 5. The amount of time I spend listening to others far exceeds the amount of time that others listen to me.
- 6. If I don't answer all the emails I receive, I feel guilty.
- 7. In order to provide luxuries for my family, I work more hours than I want to.
- 8. I schedule my work time around my clients' needs rather than around my own.
- 9. I have a hard time saying no when people in need ask me for money.
- 10. When I'm out to dinner with people who have less money than I do, I feel I should pick up the check.
- 11. I volunteer for my place of worship or other organizations even if I don't have the time.
- 12. People won't like me if I say no.
- 13. I'm the person everyone calls when they need help: babysitter, chauffeur, someone to fill in at work.
- 14. My children's happiness comes before mine. I'll do whatever it takes to make them happy.
- 15. I have a hard time saying no to my partner because I want him/her to be happy, even if saying yes makes me unhappy.
- 16. I feel selfish if I don't share what I have with others.

If you answered true more often than false, you may want to find ways to create more balance in your life by getting clear on your values and priorities and learning more about boundary setting. Please don't hesitate to call if you'd like to explore this issue further. ●



Does being a "lone wolf" in your life truly serve you?

Relevant Reading

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself, by Melody Beattie

Introvert Power: Why Your Inner Life Is Your Hidden Strength, by Laurie Helgoe

Something to Live For: Finding Your Way in the Second Half of Life, by Richard J. Leider and David Shapiro

The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich, by Timothy Ferriss

Art & Fear: Observations and Rewards on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking, by David Bayles & Ted Orland

The Value of Money: Uncover the Hidden Wisdom of Money, by Susan McCarthy

"Not all things are blessed, but the seeds of all things are blessed. The blessing is in the seed."

—Muriel Rukeyser, poet

When the Internet Becomes a Problem

The Internet is a wonderful tool. You can network with colleagues, reconnect with old friends, and accomplish in minutes such tasks like research, which used to take days.

So what's the problem?

The Internet becomes a problem when we lose productivity, we become addicted to it, and when it becomes a substitute for real experiences with people, places and things.

Real Life vs. Web Life

George spends five to eight hours a day on the Web, traveling among his pages on several social networking sites. He presents himself alternately as an assertive and confident Casanova, an opinionated law student and a successful entrepreneur.

In real life, George is none of these. Painfully shy and self-critical, he keeps to himself.

"I feel more like myself when I'm online," he says. But what he really means is, "I feel more like who I wish I was."

Virtual Infidelity

Every time Cynthia's husband heads upstairs to the office, her stomach tightens.

Cynthia confronted Victor after reading an email from a woman she had never heard of, who apparently lived in another country. Victor denied having an affair. After all, he had never actually seen the other woman, much less touched her, and he had no plans to do so. "A bunch of typed words don't amount to an affair," he maintained. It was just talking and exploring fantasies.

But to Cynthia, the intimacy expressed in the email is more threatening than a purely sexual relationship. She wondered why her partner couldn't be that intimate with her.

Simulated Experience

Four-year-old Eddie spends hours behind a computer screen studying whales and porpoises; he can identify almost anything that swims. But Eddie has never seen a real fish, although he lives near the ocean and a world-class aquarium.

Like a pint-sized hermit peering out of his window, Eddie, like huge numbers of children today, is learning about nature on a computer screen, not from direct contact with the natural world. His experience is only a simulated experience, which increasing numbers of people are willing to accept as sufficient.



Time Leakage

Handling email and surfing the Web can eat hours from every day. Every hour behind the keyboard is 60 minutes not spent doing something else. There's also an impact on your productivity. If you're surfing the Web or answering personal emails at work, you're stealing from your employer. If you're self-employed you may be squandering valuable focus and energy on things that don't matter.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

Repetitive Strain Injuries are cumulative and can strike overnight. Practice good ergonomics no matter what, and if you feel any burning or numbing in your arms or hands, get off the computer and take a break. Find out about special stretches you can do and never work through pain.

Counteracting the Tide

There is no question that the Internet is here to stay. As our culture continues its dive into this brave new world, what can we do to avoid being swept away? Here are some things to try:

- Save your personal email for the end of the workday and set a time limit beforehand for how long you'll spend online.
 - Plan activities at night and on weekends so that boredom doesn't send you to the computer.
 - Take a class in a skill you've always wanted to learn, such as fencing or photography.
 - Volunteer at a food bank, teach reading to adults who never learned, or join groups that pick up litter.
 - Take up yoga or dancing to help your body cope with all that sitting at the computer.
 - Explore a creative pursuit such as writing, painting, or cooking; try something you've always wanted to do.
 - Go hiking, camping, or to sporting events; spend more time outside.
 - Plan family outings to parks and local festivals. Check your local paper to learn what's going on.
 - Make weekly no-screen dates with your spouse or partner. Look into each other's eyes over dinner and share about your week.
- Ultimately, it's a matter of balance and awareness. Explore the amazing worlds to which the Internet offers access, just don't forget to spend more time in the real one. ●

BEYOND the Box

The following questions are designed to broaden perspectives, to open vistas, to widen the lens. There is no one right way to approach them. You can journal about them, talk to friends, create art, ponder them while driving or working out, dance them—whatever helps you explore "outside the box."

1. How does your ideal sabbatical look and feel?
2. What are you making more important than giving yourself needed time off?
3. What is your "Big But"?
4. How well do you balance giving and receiving in your life?
5. What messages have you received from family and society about giving? Receiving?
6. What's left when you give it all away?
7. What could happen if you said "no" more often?
8. How is your environment impacting you?
9. What kinds of environments support you? Inspire you?
10. What is it to live a "virtual" life? How fulfilling is it?
11. How do you use the Internet to avoid other aspects of living?
12. How might it be true that "It's always darkest before the dawn"?
13. What does it mean to embrace adversity?

Handling Adversity: You're Stronger Than You Thought

Catastrophic events like 9/11 and the aftermath of hurricane Katrina can knock us to our knees. But personal adversities can pack an equally powerful punch. Our spouse is diagnosed with cancer, our son has a mental breakdown, we lose our home. Often these events seem to come out of nowhere and feel completely unmanageable as we struggle to regain our footing and any semblance of "normal."

But, like great trees, humans can grow stronger when exposed to powerful winds. How do we increase our inner strength and flexibility so that we don't break in the wind, so that we not only survive the adversity but thrive? Here are several helpful strategies:

Take responsibility. Look at your role in the situation. Was the event, in fact, predictable? You may have had more control over the situation than you realized. At the same time, don't take more responsibility than is warranted. If your daughter develops a brain tumor it's not because you did something wrong. Be honest, but don't point fingers, not even at yourself.

Be optimistic and think creatively. Trust that there's a solution to every problem and let your mind soar. Approach the problem from new and different directions. Perhaps rather than losing your home, you could find a housemate whose rent would make the difference between paying the mortgage or not.

Have courage and speak up. Courage is taking action

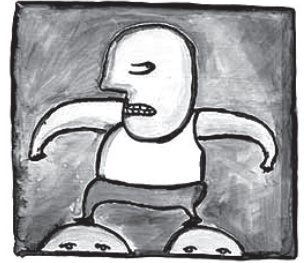
despite the fear you feel. If someone isn't taking you seriously, speak up. Be your own advocate. Tell that person what you want and need. Don't assume he or she "should know."

Take the long view. Recount other times when you have overcome challenges. How did you do it? Who or what helped you? Who or what can help you this time?

Maintain a sense of humor. There's truth in the adage: "laughter is the best medicine." Even in the darkest of times, laughter can help ease the pain.

Get support. No one can handle everything alone. When you get that overwhelmed feeling—or even before—reach out. Ask for help. Next time, ask for it sooner. You'll be amazed by how much better you feel.

Don't quit. Persistence may be the greatest human quality that helps us overcome adversity. Draw inspiration from the great heroes of the world—Nelson Mandela, Harriet Tubman, Mahatma Gandhi—people who persisted despite the odds. Remember, you are your own best ally. And you're stronger and more resilient than you thought. ●



—Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC) *“Hope is a waking dream.”*

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