



Laisha Kneiven
Certified Life Coach

For over twenty years, Laisha has successfully assisted women on their personal growth quest. Recognized by the International Coaches Federation, Newfield Associates Coaching Institute Certified Laisha as an Ontological Coach in 1999. She is an established teacher, seminar leader and lecturer for universities and community groups. Her corporate background includes expertise in marketing, sales and business management. She has served as a community outreach coordinator, hospice volunteer and women's group leader. To each of these diverse arenas, Laisha has brought her trademark insight, understanding and resourcefulness to help women discover and fulfill their desires.

Laisha is a companion to those who long for new approach to attain a better quality of life. She is an advocate for women entrepreneurs and those in life transition offering compassionate perspectives, refined observations and penetrating questions to facilitate each client's success.

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Contact Laisha for a sample coaching session:

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Solutions *for* Women

FROM LAISHA KNEIVEN

A JOURNAL OF PERSONAL WELL-BEING
DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING WOMEN'S
ASPIRATIONS AND LIFE TRANSITIONS

Coping with Change

The world seems to be changing at an extraordinary pace. We get used to the way things are, and then they shift. That change can be unsettling; even positive change can throw us for a loop.

As soon as something nudges us out of our regular routine, or challenges our understanding of how the world works and where we fit into it, we're likely to experience a deluge of feelings, including fear, anxiety, overwhelm, excitement, distraction or denial.

In turn, those feelings can manifest in behavior. You may act out with aggressive or passive-aggressive communication. You may push yourself to overwork or take the opposite approach and procrastinate, avoiding what's on your plate.

Your self-care may suffer. You may reach for unhealthy substances or behaviors, get less sleep, skip meals or overindulge. You might cut yourself off from others or spend time with people who have unhealthy habits.

The Impact

Stress from both positive and negative change can have immediate and long-term effects. Stress inhibits digestion and absorption of nutrients, impairs your body's ability to ward off germs, can cause insomnia and worsen pre-existing health conditions. If you're also engaging in unhealthy behaviors and poor self-care, you're at an even higher risk for illness or injury.

Mental abilities can be affected, as well. When you're preoccupied about the future, it's much harder to concentrate and/or apply your brainpower to what's in front of you.

Great leaders are admired for their serenity and

confidence in the face of uncertainty. For many of us, though, at such times, serenity is far from our reach. Instead, emotions are close to the surface and can flare up at inopportune times. Whether you lash out, cry or pound on your desk, it's uncomfortable to feel out of control.

Strategies for Coping with Change

Take care of your body. Eat well, sleep well, exercise to discharge stress and refrain from harmful habits, such as smoking, excessive drinking, or recreational drugs.

Take care of your mind. Stay in the present by practicing deep breathing and/or meditation. Challenge your negative thinking and keep things in perspective.

Express your emotions in healthy ways. Share them with people you trust. Release negative feelings by pounding on a pillow or a drum.

Treat others well. Strengthen your good relationships so you can draw on their support, and work at your challenging relationships so they don't add to your stress.

Be proactive. Prepare the best you can for the changes that might come, but then accept the reality of the moment. Think back to other challenges you've come through and remind yourself that everything will work out okay this time, too.

Into every life change will come, but its lasting impact doesn't have to be harmful. Change also has a way of opening new and rewarding doors. Bottom line, let change be the catalyst for better self-care, which will feed you in all times, stable and uncertain. ●

Top 10 Ways to Handle Tense Family Gatherings

Let's face it. Family gatherings are not always roses and cotton candy. If your gatherings typically upset your serenity, try some of these tips.

1. Make a pro-and-con list. Find a calm moment and decide whether it is better for you to go to the gathering or stay home.

2. Stay for fewer hours. Visit only for appetizers or dessert.

3. Be prepared. Holiday-related emotions may arrive before the date on the calendar. Recognizing the source can help you deal with them more effectively.

4. Educate yourself. Seek information on the issues or dynamics that tend to come up in your family.

5. Look at yourself. How do you contribute to the tension? How can you ease it?

6. Be gracious. Aim for maturity and compassion when dealing with family situations.

7. Seek to understand. Ask questions in an open, nondefensive way. Read Sharon Ellison's *Taking the War Out of Our Words* or *Non-Violent Communication* by Marshall Rosenberg.

8. Take care of yourself. If the atmosphere isn't safe, leave. Then gather with friends or pamper yourself.

9. Call a friend. Debrief after the visit with someone you trust.

10. Be patient. Real change—in you and in your family—takes time. ●

Self-Quiz Are You a Good Listener?

Good communication is a two-way street: listening as well as speaking. Find out how well you listen by answering the following questions.

True False

- 1. When I listen to someone, I focus my attention, look directly at him or her, and concentrate on hearing what he or she is saying.
- 2. I withhold judgment, acknowledging what the person is saying without labeling it right or wrong, good or bad, true or false.
- 3. I'm interested in what the other person is saying. When I listen to someone, I invite the speaker to express his or her opinions or feelings about the topic or issue.
- 4. I ask specific questions, such as, "What I heard you say is.... Is that right?" or "I think I understand what you said, but will you elaborate on...?" or "When you say..., do you mean...?"
- 5. If I begin to feel defensive, impatient or angry, I try to put myself in the other person's shoes and appreciate what he or she might be going through.
- 6. I respond actively by nodding, making interjections and asking questions such as, "How do you feel about that?" or "What would you have liked to do or say?"
- 7. I don't jump right in with a solution or try to fix things. I don't have to provide the "right" answer.
- 8. I try not to get hung up on the person's delivery, even if it's awkward, hesitant or garbled.
- 9. I listen to the entire message before mentally beginning any rebuttal, defense, argument or denial. Then, I wait a beat or two before speaking to make sure the speaker is finished and I am centered in my response.
- 10. I take in the speaker's non-verbal messages— facial expressions, gestures, eyes, tone of voice and posture because they can contradict or confirm the words that are used.
- 11. If I'm unable to give my full attention, I let the person know, and then agree to a specific time to have the discussion.

Becoming a good listener is a skill we learn, and like other skills, it takes practice to get better. Being a good listener is also a gift we give to other people. Letting someone know he or she has really been heard is one of the finest things we can do. ●



What would it take for you to stand out in your life?

Relevant Reading

- It's Only Too Late If You Don't Start Now: How to Create Your Second Life at Any Age*, by Barbara Sher
- Dreamwork: Techniques for Discovering the Creative Power in Dreams*, by Jeremy Taylor
- The Soul of Money: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life*, by Lynne Twist
- Focus on the Good Stuff: The Power of Appreciation*, by Mike Robbins
- Provoking Your Brilliance: Remembering Your Inner Wisdom and Moving from Confusion to Clarity*, by Machen MacDonald
- The Secret of Transitions: How to Move Effortlessly to Higher Levels of Success*, by Jim Manton

"Human beings have an inalienable right to invent themselves."

—Germaine Greer, author

Tapping the Power of Your Dreams

Most of us know that a good night's sleep decreases stress, increases memory recall, and improves overall functioning. Less well-known is that our nightly dreams also work to keep our psyches healthy and help us access our full potential. With just a little practice, we can learn to tap into this valuable source of information and use it to enhance every aspect of our personal and professional lives.

Every dream, no matter how small or strange, has a message for us. Dreams give us hints of what is to come, point out opportunities we are missing and suggest creative solutions to problems we face. In the 1970s, producer Jerry Weintraub dreamt of a dazzling marquee that read: "Jerry Weintraub presents Elvis at Madison Square Garden." He followed his dream and brought Elvis back on the road, making millions.

To find out what your dreams are telling you, here are some things to listen for.

The yes/no feeling after waking.

Jessica felt stifled by her job but was afraid to quit and strike out on her own. After a tumultuous day, she went to sleep early and woke in the morning with a peaceful feeling of resolve, knowing that, in spite of her fear, leaving her job was the best decision.

Questions answered through imagery. David was considering leaving his wife when he dreamt of viewing his recently deceased father through a window. He interpreted the dream as saying that grieving was currently more important than making a big life change.

Literal dream messages. Samantha had a dream in which her heart fell out onto the sidewalk. She's an experienced dreamworker, so she knew not to take the dream too literally, but since high blood pressure runs in her family, she went for a check-up. Her blood pressure was so high, her doctor said that she could have had a heart attack at any time.

More Ways Dreams Assist Us

Dreams help us manage change. Phyllis's workplace was undergoing restructuring but she thought her position was safe. She dreamt of walking into the office to find her desk bare and

her coworkers gone. Several days later her whole team was laid off. Her dream had prepared her for the change even though she hadn't wanted to admit it.

Dreams give us great ideas. Paul McCartney woke with a song in his head that he was sure belonged to someone else. He played it for friends and they all assured him it was new. Convinced, he turned his dream song into "Yesterday," one of his biggest hits ever.

If you're struggling with personal or career issues, check your dreams to see if a great solution is waiting in the wings. Often all it takes is listening to realize you had the answer all along.

Tips for Working with Your Dreams

Before going to sleep, state your intention to remember your dreams. Like priming the pump, this may take a while, but soon your dreams will flow.



Try to wake before your alarm goes off. Nothing erases a dream faster than being startled awake.

When you wake from a dream, lie still. Translate the images into words before opening your eyes.

Keep pen and paper beside your bed. That way you can start writing before the dream fades.

Better yet, keep a dream journal. Record your dreams and recurring symbols. While some images may be universal, your dream language is your own.

Don't judge your dreams. They speak in metaphor, image and pun. As with any language, it takes time to learn.

If you want help, ask for a dream, and then seriously consider its answer. Often dreams answer the question behind the question.

All dreams come for our benefit—even nightmares. Have the courage to face what your dreams are telling you.

Share your dreams. Working on dreams with others is a great way to learn about dreams. ●

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. What change in your life is causing you to feel anxious, and how, as a result, are you behaving?
2. Which of the strategies for coping with change could you use to reduce your anxiety?
3. What stress-producing thoughts keep you from being serene in the face of uncertainty?
4. What dynamics in your family are a source of stress?
5. What family gathering are you dreading, and what can you do to take care of yourself?
6. What is the first thing you could change in order to become a better listener?
7. How have you used dream imagery or messages in your life?
8. In what area of your life would you be happy to receive a dream of guidance?
9. During a break-up, how did you add to the stress and hostility?
10. How have the lessons learned from a past relationship enhanced your life?

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (But You Can Lessen Its Distress)

Whether children are involved or not, ending a marriage or partnership challenges us like nothing else. The term “good divorce” can seem a contradiction in terms. And yet, there are things we can do, practices we can bring into our lives that will help us navigate the big waves and the roiling waters.

Take care of yourself. Attend to your physical and emotional needs, taking time to rest and heal during this stressful period.

Minimize change for yourself and your children. Whether or not you have custody, whenever possible, keep your routines, rhythms, and habits the same. Discipline the children and maintain the rules that always have been in force.

Express your feelings, but not necessarily to the other person. It might be more productive to vent your anger by journaling or painting furious red canvases.

Seek support. If you're feeling hopeless or discouraged, seek help from a counselor, clergy member or friends. Remember, we've all been there. You, too, can get through it.

Don't try to physically, financially or emotionally hurt your spouse or partner. A good outcome in a divorce is something both parties can live with; it's not about winning but being able to move on independently.

Communicate. When talking isn't working, use email, mail or fax. Keep your exchanges out of work time and remember that the goal is not to zing the other but to gain clarity.

Avoid speaking negatively about your ex in front of your children or mutual friends. Such talk has a negative impact on your children and their self-esteem, and will polarize friends who want to remain in relationship with both your former partner and you. Also, don't encourage others to take sides against your ex. You put them in an awkward position and it could backfire on you.

Involve a mediator. An impartial voice can be essential when negotiating post-relationship arrangements, such as co-parenting or splitting belongings.

Practice the golden rule. As you part ways, treat your ex as you would want to be treated.



Perform a closing ritual or ceremony. If possible, do this with your former partner; if not, then with loved ones or by yourself. In your ceremony, you might acknowledge the good things about the relationship, the ways you grew, even what you will miss. Spend time with your feelings, do something nurturing, and then

imagine your next step. Finally, say goodbye.

Take stock of the relationship. Spend time—perhaps months—acknowledging the lessons you've learned from this relationship. Do this on your own, in your journal, or with the help of a professional. ●

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *essayist & poet (1803-1882)*

Solutions for Women is dedicated to supporting women's aspirations and life transitions.
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