

Welcome To CoachNet – January 2006

The online newsletter for navigating life's changes and transitions from Bailey Coaching and Mary Ann Bailey, MC

Feature Article: The Island Where it All Turns Out

Do you often find yourself thinking about how great your life will be when you finally find the right job, have enough money, live in your dream house, or are in a wonderful relationship? Do you start statements with, "One day...., When I, or If I only could...?" Do you find yourself focusing more on what is missing or wrong with your life than what is right and good with your life?

If you have answered "yes" to any of the above statements, you are in a good company. Living in a society that is driven by achieving and accumulating, it is easy to get sucked into the belief that our success and happiness is dependent on how close we can get our life to simulate the ideal as portrayed by Madison Avenue.

We are constantly being bombarded with subtle messages telling us if we only drove a certain kind of car, looked a certain way, and made a certain amount of money, our troubles would be over. The good life is waiting for us just around the corner at a place my coach used to call, "the island where it all turns out".

The island where it all turns out is the magical place where our life is finally the way we want it. We are successful, financially stable, physically fit, and admired by friends and family. There is a utopia waiting for us if we just work hard enough, do the right things, and be the right kind of person. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

But unfortunately, there is no such island. It is just a mythical place that only exists in our imagination. As we struggle to deal with life's disappointments and frustrations, it can be comforting to think that there is a better life ahead.

And then there are the alluring messages of the advertising world which promise us a happy and successful life if we only drive a BMW, look like a model, and have a vacation home in the Caribbean. So, before know it, we find ourselves hooked into believing the tale of "the island where it all turns out".

However, we do not live in a one-island-fits-all kind of world. Each of us is unique in what we value, what we want to accomplish, what skills and interests we have, and in what brings joy and meaning into our lives. And therefore, it is up to us to cultivate our own life in a way that best supports and nurtures our special uniqueness.

But how do we do that? How do we stay true to ourselves in a culture that is constantly tempting us with visions of the "perfect" life? Below are three ideas that I have found to be helpful. I invite you to give them a try.

1. Take time to clearly think about what is important to you. What are your values? What do you like doing? What skills and interests do you want to pursue? What brings you joy?

Once you clarify your priorities, you then can develop personal and professional goals that are meaningful to you and that will move you in a direction that supports your life vision. This is a much more satisfying scenario than expending time and energy trying to realize someone else's goals and ideas of success and happiness.

2. Keep your focus in the present. What is happening right now? If it is something good, take time to enjoy it. Don't short change the moment by worrying about what occurred yesterday or what might happen tomorrow. Have fun and appreciate the pleasantness of the moment.

If you find yourself in a more negative situation, focus your attention not on the content of the problem, but rather on how you are reacting to the problem. What is your process for dealing with stressful situations? Is it effective? Where do you find yourself getting stuck?

Learn from the situation so the next time you find yourself in a difficult scenario, you will have greater skills and confidence to manage the issue more effectively.

As you become more adept at enjoying the good moments and dealing with the unpleasant ones, you will no longer need the island as an escape hatch. You will have the knowledge, power, and resources to live life successfully right here, right now.

3. Practice finding joy in the simple things in life. If you think back to the times when you felt the happiest, most content, or most at peace, I would venture to say it probably wasn't the result of buying, achieving, or accumulating something.

It might have been spending a quiet moment by yourself, being in nature, playing with your kids, or sharing something special with a loved one.

The feelings we get from these kinds of moments are exactly what we are hoping to experience when we reach that elusive island. But the irony is that there is no island, so there is no reason to wait until we get there to bring the feelings of joy, happiness and contentment into our life.

Every day we have the opportunity to experience joy and happiness in our lives. But the only way we'll recognize the opportunities when they arise is by keeping our attention focused on life as it is happening – not life as we hope it will be when we finally reach "the island where it all turns out".

Until next time, all the best,
Mary Ann Bailey, MC

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