

Life coaches offer help through major transitions

Sara Michael, The Examiner

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Columbia - Anne Tschirgi was undecided over whether to change jobs or go back to school.

"I was at a transition in my life, and I was looking for a new direction," said Tschirgi, a pharmacist.

The Columbia resident turned to a life coach last May, becoming part of a growing number of people to rely on life coaches to help them with a major transition.

People who are stuck in a current pattern, considering a new career or facing a major change are looking to life coaches.

Unlike a psychiatrist who may delve into a patient's past as a clue to current struggles, a life coach focuses on the future.

"Coaching is taking you from the present to the future you want, and then providing that support," said Peggy Walton, a life coach based in Columbia who works with Tschirgi.

Coaching usually lasts four to eight weeks, and there is a constant turnover of clients, Walton said.

Kelly Castro coaches creative people, such as painters, writers and musicians, who tend to have a "unique set of problems," she said.

Creative individuals tend to struggle with perfectionism and a lack of flexibility, finding themselves stuck, said Castro, who is based in Canton and charges between \$75 and \$135.

One of the greatest challenges for the coach is asking open questions to guide the client instead of telling them what to do, Walton said.

"People usually know what is best for them; it's helping them come to

that reality and then helping them do it," said Walton, who also teaches English at Howard Community College.

Jonathan Blithe started working with Walton last February and said he has learned how to think more positively and re-evaluate why he was in school.

"I didn't realize how disorganized I was in, not only school, but everything else in my life," said Blithe, a 22-year-old Howard Community College student.

Now, he has made a "100 percent change," he said.

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