



Passion for Life Coaching, LLC

Making Deliberate Choices for a Fulfilling Life

Newsletter by Suzette Langley, Life Coach and MSW

The “R” Word

May 2008

In graduate school, I worked as a first grade room leader at an after school program. My assistant was an extremely responsible high school student who remains one of my best friends. To simplify our environment and create order from chaos, we outlined several room rules. To this day, neither of us recalls Rule #1. Rule #2, however, plainly written and posted was “No Whining.”

I know, a tough expectation for first graders! The first two weeks were rough. Each day, we faced a child talking in a whiny voice. We redirected each child with, “When you can talk in a normal voice, we will listen.” Within a month, our room claimed the fame of being the most well-behaved, polite room in the program.

Why the “No Whining” rule? First, neither of us could tolerate that nasally, high-pitched whiny voice the kids projected so well. That aside, we both believed whining placed the responsibility to fix whatever was not working on someone else. Common whines from our kids were about tying their shoes, doing homework, resolving conflict, and fixing something. The whining usually meant a heap of complaints with little action to make changes. We knew very well, most of the time, the children could resolve what they needed to without our assistance.

Fast forward to my life as a therapist. A differentiating quality about me was that I asked and expected patients to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. Yes, some issues, past or present, required resolution through the talking process. But, marinating, stewing, or whining about the past rarely brought happiness, confidence, or satisfaction. My patients learned they could request others to change or do what they wanted only so much. In the end, we landed at the question they needed to answer and take responsibility for – “what are you going to do about it?”

Now, I coach my clients in many skills. How to communicate effectively, develop healthy lifestyles, manage time, and reduce stress. Truthfully, I could coach until I lost my voice and unless my clients take responsibility to implement new skills and change their habits, my coaching falls on deaf ears.

Taking responsibility can be difficult. We may need to change our perspective, change old habits, or even admit to making a mistake. For example, in February my husband and I visited friends for ten days. I needed to complete some work while away, but I did not make my needs clear or firmly outline a time to work. Instead, I blamed my husband. He made me go out and play in the warm sun and sit on the beach! Ok, not really. I failed to be responsible for what I needed to do and caused myself a lot of stress. It's not easy to admit. However, once I took responsibility, I created a more effective plan for my 6 day trip to visit another friend in April. I accomplished all my work and then some and had plenty of time for stress-free play.

I leave you with this quote:

"I have come to the point where, if I am despairing, I recognize that I have selected despair; and therefore, I am responsible for my despair. And if I'm joyful, I'm also responsible for my joy, and I can celebrate it. So...I put myself in a position of being fully responsible for me and the wonderful thing about that is that it frees you because you have no responsibility. I can't blame you: I can't blame God; I can't blame anybody. I can only assume full responsibility for my own behavior, my own despair, my own tears, my own joy and, I hope, my own rapture." -Anonymous

Upcoming Events at Big Vanilla Arnold

Rockin' Together: Women Rock for Mothers and Daughters - Friday, May 9th, 7:00-9:30pm

Moms and daughters are busy. Finding quality time to connect can be a challenge. Instead of the usual shopping and dining routine, try a unique, exciting and physical way to connect with each other in addition to other mother/daughter teams. Rockin' Together combines the skills of Executive Coach & MSW, Suzette Langley, and one of Big Vanilla's trained female Rock Wall Instructors to provide an evening of fun that encourages the discovery of mental and physical strength, conquering fears, and overcoming challenges. Mothers and daughters will see each other in a new light and learn how the Rock Wall is a metaphor for life and life's challenges. All climbing gear is provided with the exception of climbing shoes. Sneakers and gym attire required. Bottled water recommended.

Ages: 12 and up.

Fee: \$45 members/ \$50 non-members

2 pairs MUST BE pre-registered to hold this program. Maximum number of participants is 5 pairs.

Women Rock will be held at Big Vanilla Athletic Club, 1209 Ritchie Highway, Arnold, MD. Register online at: <http://www.bigvanilla.com/arnold/adultclasses.html> or call 410-544-2525 to register.

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