



From Burnout to Bliss

Life coach Deborah Jane Wells shares her journey from burnout to fulfillment

BY MARY LYNN BRUNY

It's never too late to become the person you might have been.

— George Eliot

In 2009, Aurora resident Deborah Jane Wells was doing a very interesting thing each week when she visited the Tallyn's Reach Library: She was shrinking. In the course of the year, Wells lost 80 pounds, much to the amazement of the witnessing librarians. How did she do it? they wanted to know. The answer was that she didn't just change her outside; she changed her inside, radically transforming her life for the better in every way. Now she wants everybody to know that they can do it too.

Today, Wells, who exudes enthusiasm and warmth, is a successful life coach, broadcast personality, book author, public speaker, artist and Reiki master (look it up!). But in 2005, the self-proclaimed type-A personality, a senior partner at a global firm, left her 30-year career in organization transformation consulting, completely burned out, miserable and overweight.

"I was severely, severely depressed for 10 years," says Wells. "It is still a miracle to me every day that I am here."

Knowing she needed a change, Wells retired and in 2006 moved from Virginia to Aurora, where she reached rock bottom before deciding to take hold of her life. "I said to myself, 'You can sit here and keep whining and complaining, or you can take control of one thing and focus all your energy on it,'" Wells says. That one thing was

her weight, which she successfully set on losing. Knowing that her weight was only a symptom of her inner struggles, Wells began a long personal exploration that ultimately led her to a happy, healthy place. "First it was a physical transition, and then it was a mental, spiritual and emotional transition," she says.

One morning the light dawned, and Wells decided to use the lessons she learned to help others. She earned a life-coaching certificate in 2010 from the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching. "I wanted every person on the planet to feel what I was feeling," she says. "I knew if I could get there from where I was, then anybody could."

STEP 1: SHOW YOURSELF SOME LOVE

Combining her former professional experience with her newfound insights, Wells created and trademarked a practical way of viewing and examining one's life that she calls "The Discovery Framework." Her No. 1 message is self-love: "When you fall in love with yourself, everything else falls into place, personally and professionally," she says.

That message may sound narcissistic to some, but Wells believes that in order to have personal contentment, "you first have to learn how to treat yourself with love, respect, curiosity, compassion and gratitude. When you treat yourself with those five things, unconditionally and at every moment, that's when you start living,"

Visit Wells's website: www.djwlifecoach.com.
Find her blog at www.djwlifecoach.wordpress.com.



Aurora life coach Deborah Jane Wells with Maisy, one of the three cats who manage her life.

she says. “The people who do what I’m describing energize everyone around them. They have a spring in their step. They’re optimistic. They bring hope to everyone and everything. They are the antithesis of what we think of as self-absorbed.”

Wells’s goal as a life coach is to help her clients remove their roadblocks to a fulfilling life. “The people who come to me want help figuring out why they’re stuck,” she says. “They know they’re stuck, but can’t quite figure out why they can’t get unstuck.” Common issues include burnout, relationship issues, unhealthy patterns and using productivity to feel worthy. “There is a mistaken belief that busyness is the same as purpose,” says Wells, “and people get caught in a ‘hamster wheel’ approach to life.”

Although many of her clients are from Aurora and the greater Denver area, they span the globe and include young and old, women and men. Wells coaches individuals, couples and groups, hosts creativity workshops and does public-speaking seminars. “If you’ve reached a place in life where you know there is somewhere you want to go and you’re not getting there, you’d benefit from coaching,” she says.

Wells’s uplifting message is spreading. In January 2013, she began a 60-minute weekly radio talk show, *Choose Your Energy: Change Your Life*, on VoiceAmerica.com’s EmPOWERment channel. Her first book, also titled *Choose Your Energy: Change Your Life!* will be published in the spring by Hay House/Balboa Press. It features Wells’s journey and message, as well as many client stories. It’s a big year for Wells; a life-coaching cruise with Royal Caribbean is also in the works.

Is the type-A person falling into the old trap of being drained by her work? “Absolutely not!” she says. “I am a great example of how rewarding work is when it is fueled from love.” ●

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After three of her loved ones died within a five-week period, Wells found comfort in creating 75 ceramic masks at the Bicentennial Arts Center and embellishing them for auction by various local charities. Now, her clients purchase her masks and embellish them in the self-exploration workshops Wells offers.

Tools for Personal Growth

When you fuel all aspects of yourself with love, respect, curiosity, compassion and gratitude, your life becomes a grounded but fluid journey to wholeness. Every breath, thought, word and act fosters a gracious life filled with faith, hope, prosperity, peace and joy.

The following practices—just a few of my favorites—help you realize the essential shift from believing these principles in your head to living them from your heart. When you drift off-center occasionally, as any of us can when we’re overwhelmed by stress and gripped by ancient self-destructive scripts, these tools are the key to recognizing it quickly and getting back on track.

Pay Attention: If you don’t recognize you’re feeling stressed, you can’t change it. Practice mindfulness by noticing what you’re feeling and figuring out why.

Write It Down: Getting stressful thoughts out of your head and onto paper can improve your sense of perspective. Often, just putting them in writing reduces them to a more manageable size you can begin to get your arms around.

Breathe: Next time things start getting a little crazy, stop, take three deep breaths, become fully present, and realize you have options. Your brain needs oxygen to function effectively. Try setting a timer on your phone or computer to remind you periodically to stop, close your eyes for a minute and just breathe.

Be Here Now: Forget rehashing the past and agonizing over the future. This moment is your only real opportunity to make a difference. Just you, just here, just now, just be.

Get Curious: If everything’s an opportunity, where might the opportunity be in this situation? Assume the best and look for the silver lining in even the darkest cloud.

Trust Your Gut: You have inside you all the wisdom you seek. Instead of stressing yourself out by fighting your instincts or feeling compelled to justify your hunches with logic, try trusting your intuition for a change.

Behave As If: There are two aspects to this one. First, if you gave yourself the same care and attention you give your friends and loved ones, what support would you give yourself right now? Second, what would you dare to do if you believed you couldn’t fail?

Time for What Matters: Time is not a scarce resource. You have all the time you need for the things that matter. Your sole responsibility in each moment is to discern what matters most right now, focus and follow through.

Take Baby Steps: Slow and steady produces meaningful, lasting results. Vast, forced output is rarely sustained. Great strides of lasting value involve myriad baby steps over time. Identify the next small step and take it; then another, and another, and another. Before you know it, you’ll have built your dream—and it will last you your whole life through.

—Adapted from *Choose Your Energy, Change Your Life!* by Deborah Jane Wells