Client Testimonial:

My Coaching Story

by Bryan, an executive at a small, high-pressure, start-up company

I got my performance appraisal, and it wasn't a good one. I got the top rating for performance to goals, and the worst possible rating for "interpersonal." I also got threatened. By my boss. For my job. Okay, now I knew things were real. I also knew that I didn't want to be the person that I was being portrayed as. At the same time, I didn't know how to make the change that was needed.

Luckily for me, a friend read an article about "coaches," knew I was in this dilemma, and passed it on to me. I did some research, e-mailed a request for proposal to several potential coaches, received several responses, and narrowed it down to three choices. I went through a coaching session with each of the three and found that I could easily make a decision.

Karen was insightful from the first call. I quickly connected with her style of expressing things. She was able to put threads together to weave a line between things that previously seemed unconnected. Needless to say, my coaching got off to a good start. Some of my biggest hurdles became smaller and easier to focus on quickly and I began to make progress toward my goals.

Of course, as most stories go, there comes a time when things got a little tougher. For me this meant that I exhausted the low hanging fruit within about a month and then didn't really know how to continue. Up to that time, I had clear examples to discuss from recent events plus a lot of past experiences to draw on and learn from. After that initial period, I found myself in the zone of knowing that I hadn't really changed yet, but at the same time, I was out of the immediate threat of losing my job.

I struggled for a few coaching sessions with ineffective discussions. All of a sudden, nothing was gelling in the coaching sessions. After thinking this through, I decided to tell Karen that I was done with coaching and it just wasn't the right tool for me. When I picked up the phone to have my final session, she surprised me by starting the call with "Maybe coaching isn't right for you, Bryan. You don't seem motivated, and it takes a motivated person to truly make change." Whoa, here I thought Karen would spend my time and money any way I wanted (I never give people enough credit). Not so. Instead of quitting that day, we talked over what coaching was and how it could be effective. She gave me several suggestions of ways to look at the problem--now we were coaching on coaching.

After reading some of the articles she recommended and really forcing myself to think about the content of Karen's message, I found the right way to think about coaching. Initially, I wanted the coach to do the work. I would show up for my phone call, tell a story, and she would do the rest. Lead me to the promised land. The realization that I came to later was that it was truly up to me (duh) to put in the effort. To spend some real time (about a half hour a week) thinking about what I wanted to be coached on.

I started doing this, and, lo and behold, coaching became even more effective than it was in the beginning. Karen helped me make some real breakthroughs on how my behaviors were causing bad situations and on how my beliefs influenced my behaviors. My thorough preparation allowed Karen to do her job, connecting the threads, and making great suggestions on ways I could handle things. The coaching was back on track.

The whole coaching process from my first contact with Karen to today took five months. I feel like I've come a long way in that five months and to validate that, I just received another performance appraisal--we do them every six months--and I got a top grade across the board. My boss specifically mentioned the awesome turn-around in my interpersonal interactions. Don't get me wrong, everyone including me is still waiting to see long-term proof of change, but I believe it will be there and that I am closer today to being the person I would like to be because of the coaching I received from Karen.

Thanks, Karen!