

## Case Studies

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## **Coping in a Time of Personal Change**

A psychotherapist in her 40s was in the process of a divorce and hired Ella to help her cope during the difficult personal changes she was experiencing. She needed to get back on her feet relatively quickly and effectively so that she could raise and support her young child. She needed guidance and specific plans to prepare her for this life-changing event, such as changing residence, identifying lucrative and interesting career opportunities, and developing the mental strength and endurance to help her navigate during times of stress. She was also plagued with unresolved past issues, with limited financial means and lack of support to care for ailing parents living far away. She felt isolated and overwhelmed by personal and professional problems.

Ella provided her with a supportive, non-judgmental environment. At the same time, Ella gently pushed her to find the right professional niche and to make concrete steps forward in her new life. Important aspects of the life facilitation process included defining professional goals and working toward financial security, as well as training her to reframe her thoughts and view herself in a new, positive light. While providing her support during this difficult transition, Ella challenged this client to move her away from old patterns and boxed thinking that were holding her back and hurting her. She helped her redefine new ways of looking at herself and her life achievements so she would not succumb to a mentality of victimhood, but rather grow from her unfortunate experience and take responsibility for building her own happiness.

Within a couple of months, the psychotherapist found a position as a therapist in her field of specialization, and in the vicinity of a new apartment she had rented. She was ecstatic. Her confidence grew, and as she learned not to relive her past but go forward with clear objectives, she learned to measure each step and have each successful thought and action reinforce her attitude and change her emotions positively.

## **Personal Improvement through Coaching**

A high level professional woman in her 50s hired Ella to help her address four priorities: losing weight, getting out of debt, expanding her professional responsibilities, and finding a new love.

Realizing that these issues were interconnected, Ella first addressed the most critical priority -- eliminating debt. She helped the client create a new financial plan to cut expenses and get rid of credit cards. Ella kept her highly accountable, and the client was debt-free in approximately three months. The achievement of this first goal improved the woman's self-esteem and sense of control.

Ella coached her toward the next goal of weight loss by helping take the emotion out of eating. Her client agreed to exercise every day, eliminate unhealthy foods, structure her meals, and report results back to Ella. Even a new way of shopping for food – not purchasing junk foods -- was an exercise in money saving. After six months, she had lost about 15 pounds and continued to lose weight steadily. Ella believed weight loss was intrinsically linked to the way she perceived herself.

To address the third goal, a new love life, she and Ella discussed ways to connect to new people and create a romantic relationship. Ella's client identified what she enjoyed doing outside of work, registered for evening courses that interested her, and joined a support group for people struggling with weight. She also joined a hiking group. She started making new connections and feeling better about herself, no longer feeling isolated. Each successful step made it easier to reach the next level, and, over time, she met a man whom she started dating.

The coaching process revealed that Ella's client had been afraid to speak with her boss on how to expand her field of responsibilities. She and Ella worked together to create a work plan that her boss would find hard to refuse. This created a personal struggle, as she was not accustomed to making her voice heard and tended to feel victimized by her circumstances. Being a 'victim' was a comfort zone that served her well as an excuse for not attaining her dreams. Ella helped her put together a work plan with increased responsibilities and made her commit to a day and time for speaking with her boss. The effort was highly successful. Her boss listened to the proposal without interruptions, told her that he had been waiting for years for such a great proposal, and asked her to implement and execute the work. She was stunned and exhilarated from joy and by the sense of newly experienced success.

## **Coaching as a Path toward Setting and Achieving Professional and Personal Goals**

A financial services and accounting professional admitted that his professional and personal lives were a mess. Professionally, he was overworked, always behind on deadlines, and constantly putting out fires, procrastinating and sabotaging himself. He felt stressed and burdened by his firm's responsibility towards employees and clients. Management did not have a particular road map for running the business and, instead, improvised as they went along. They had no strategy and no vision. Not surprisingly, he felt that he never achieved anything of substance, was running on empty, and constantly felt ineffective and tired.

Ella worked closely with him to help him simplify, clarify and resolve issues. She helped him structure his thinking, attitude and behavior in such a way that he became accountable for every step taken forward. She taught him to delegate work, define and delineate the roles of all employees, set goals, develop a vision for the company, and rally all employees behind the vision. With Ella's guidance, the company instituted regular staff meetings. When conflicts arose between the partners regarding treatment of employees or other issues, Ella guided her client on ways to resolve them efficiently and painlessly. She empowered and helped him change his thoughts and behaviors so that every step of the way would serve him constructively manner. He never felt isolated again and knew he could count on Ella's support to reposition him on the right tracks.

Today he works less and makes more money. He has more time for his family and friends, and for hobbies that he enjoys. Professionally, he knows where he is going and has set short- and long-term objectives. He credits Ella with keeping him focused, motivated, and accountable by supporting him, telling him the truth, and challenging his thinking and options. Through the coaching and consulting process, this client has reached every goal that he set for himself. He plans to continue working with Ella for years to come.

## **Building a Platform for Long-Term Sustained Growth**

The owner and CEO of a 45-employee company that manufactures and distributes jewelry wholesale wanted to double his company's sales from \$20 million to \$40 million. He hired Ella as an advisor and coach in order to determine the most constructive way to grow the company and to set a solid platform for long-term sustained growth. Ella determined that the growth strategy should include effective leadership, clear vision, clear thinking, the setting and communicating of goals and objectives, intelligent hiring, incentivizing the sales force, expanding markets and focusing on results, and clearing out all personal and other barriers that were holding the company and its employees back. New thinking had to be encouraged, and new creative ways to expand had to be explored.

In working with the CEO, Ella identified personal issues that needed to be resolved before focusing on business issues. The CEO admitted that he felt ineffective because he was highly distracted by personal challenges and others in the company echoed his erratic decision-making and absent-mindedness.

The consulting process yielded positive results: Sales started increasing steadily. Product quality improved. Hiring processes carefully balanced the company's staffing needs with the ability of the potential hire to fit into company culture, vision, and objectives. Inter-company relationships improved. Personnel and sales forces acted more professionally. Effective marketing campaigns were developed. The company expanded into e-commerce. Higher incentives yielded a more motivated – and happier -- sales force. Additionally, everyone from staff to management became more accountable for performance and results.

Ella also addressed issues surrounding the CFO's performance and unfulfilled professional expectations. The CEO had disagreements with the CFO regarding management and work style. Ella provided coaching and consulting separately to the CEO and CFO. She then worked with them together to help them function as a team, and also joined board meetings to ensure that discussions, decisions, objectives and strategies were aligned with the end result for healthy growth and expansion in the marketplace.

## **Improving Board Member Relations and Productivity**

Dissent was common among the board members of a public multinational company headquartered in the US and with subsidiaries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. They did not get along, and discussions often were accompanied by personal fights, interruptions, and antagonism. Members aired personal feelings rather than considering the good of the company and shareholders. They formed cliques and adopted attitudes and behaviors to spite others and act in a contrarian way. Decision-making was stressful and unproductive, and often there was no follow-up, as conflicts between division heads ensued.

The company's chairman, recognizing that changes would not come about spontaneously and that this self-defeating style would become entrenched, hired Ella. She worked as a coach with board members individually at first, allowing them the personal and confidential space to air their issues and discuss their own personal, divisional and managerial challenges. She then continued meeting with them individually and collectively over a period of a few months to improve their relationships and help them operate in a fruitful and constructive way. Ella then moved to small group work, and finally to a larger group to help them practice new ways to relate to one another.

Productive shifts started occurring during management discussions. New and clear boundaries were set on how board members communicated so that discussions became a source of effective decisions and intelligent objectives and strategies. As management discussions progressed, these new measures impacted how others in the company interacted, and a more respectful tone filtered down to managers.

## **Turning a CEO into a Leader**

The CEO of a multi-billion dollar global communications company hired Ella as a consultant and coach to help him be a more effective leader. While well-respected as a professional, the CEO was perceived by others as taciturn, closed, intimidating, cold, distant, and uncommunicative. In contrast, he viewed himself as an inspiring leader. He thought that he worked by consensus but in fact employees shied away from him. Also, he needed to be prepared for taking on additional responsibilities in the company's worldwide subsidiaries, as well as in interviews for the press and the media.

Ella focused on helping him develop key leadership behaviors and strengthen leadership competencies. He needed to feel comfortable in his role so that he could inspire confidence and rally employees, board members and the organization around his visions. Ella helped him define and set personal goals for improving his management style: Act in a way that inspires confidence and makes people believe in him as leader, visionary, innovator, risk taker, and smart business decision maker. Learn to open up. Adopt a more personalized management approach and maintain an open door policy. Develop direct reports and other tools to strengthen communications with and feedback to employees. Try new techniques for opening up in an authentic way. Learn to enjoy the benefits of openness and connection. Break up personal barriers that were holding him back.

He increasingly felt more comfortable with himself and his surroundings. Ella provided him ongoing support, and kept challenging the strict pre-conceived ideas that kept him from flourishing as a leader of this organization.

## **Group work: Moving Executives from Putting Out Fires to Strategizing**

A group of business executives from various industries hired Ella to facilitate their regularly scheduled brainstorming sessions. Some of the issues they were facing included lack of plan and objectives, functioning on “put out fire” mode, lack of long-term strategies, challenges with unmotivated employees, lack of clarity as to their roles as leaders versus managers, personal distractions and general time management and decision-making issues

In listening to the executives and asking questions, Ella help them delineate and define what was important for them and deserved their attention, versus what urgent matters demanded their time. She led group discussions on setting corporate priorities, creating road maps for constructive and income-generating plans and developing measurable systems for impeccable execution and implementation. She helped them analyze how effective decisions are reached, how to follow through with them, how to improve business relationships, create visions that employees rally behind and maintain supportive environments for sustained personal and professional goals.

This group became highly interactive and dynamic, and found the facilitated group process to be highly challenging, enjoyable, exciting, and extremely empowering. It was conducive toward positive change, and motivated them to maintain a higher level of awareness and to take ownership of their actions and behaviors.

## **Creating Stability in an Uncertain World**

A large real estate firm invited Ella to speak to their top producers to help them cope with the challenges created by diminishing markets and their fears around an uncertain financial future. They felt paralyzed, frustrated and demoralized by a changing marketplace and external forces that were beyond their control. Ella combined her presentation with a facilitated group discussion about overcoming fears and frustrations. By asking questions and sharing her insights, she helped group members clarify their feelings about their rapidly changing business environment. Parts of the discussion centered on ways to channel their anxiety into forward movement and achievement, and to reposition their thought process, behaviors, and accountability system. Ella helped them brainstorm issues such as turning difficult situations into opportunities, fragility into resiliency, and paralysis into momentum. The group collectively co-created concrete strategies for dealing with work paralysis and explored the process of adjusting expectations, resetting goals, and creating new opportunities. One aspect of the discussion aimed at increasing their sense of empowerment and shifting from inaction to pro-active approaches that would lead to successful outcomes.