

## Coach for life

By BILL SCHWANKE of Missoula.com

**Erika Rauthe started her Authenticity Life Coaching business:** in Missoula just over a year ago in an effort to help people balance the seven primary areas of their lives. BILL SCHWANKE/Missoula.com You might have heard the ad for a local bank on Missoula radio stations that features a gruff-talking life coach telling people how to get their business and personal financial lives together.

But for a real life coach there is a lot more to deal with than just finances.

Enter Erika Rauthe, a Kalispell native and 2001 University of Montana grad who does life coaching for a living through her Authenticity Life Coaching business.

After earning her B.A. in interpersonal/intercultural communications studies, Rauthe wanted to create a job for herself that would allow her to stay in Missoula and live comfortably doing work that would keep her engaged.

"I finally had an epiphany that life coaching was my calling and I went up to a school in Victoria, British Columbia, called Coaching and Leadership International," Rauthe recalled.

She received her power coaching certification and set up her practice in Missoula just over a year ago.

Rauthe first dabbled in this type of work "unofficially" in the 1990s.

"I always joked with my friends, giving them advice all the time - asked for or unasked for - that maybe I should be a life coach," Rauthe noted. "It wasn't until just a couple years ago that, hey, (I found out) that actually exists and it's a very cool profession."

After researching various life coaching schools, she settled on the one in British Columbia.

So what does a life coach do?

"It's sort of like an architect for your life," Rauthe explained, "as opposed to an archaeologist which oftentimes therapy can be.

"Therapy can oftentimes require you to dig deep into your past and dig up old stuff whereas a life coach . . . would take the tools that you already have and help you build your ideal . . . life with those tools and skills," she added.

Rauthe said there are seven aspects of life to look at including family, social, career, financial, and mental or intellectual.

"Basically any obstacle that you're running into you can fit into one of those areas of life," Rauthe said, "and sort of narrow it down . . . so that they're all at about the same balance level."

Rauthe acknowledged that life coaching is therapeutic but in a more holistic way.

"The client is definitely the one accountable for overcoming the obstacles," she said. "They already have the skills and the tools. My job is just to help bring those out so that they're stronger and more in the forefront."

Rauthe said life coaching can be applied to individuals ages 6 and older - men, women, athletes, professionals, people looking to change careers or lose weight, or just get along better in relationships.



"It really can be very broad and I would never turn anyone away because obviously they're seeking coaching as opposed to any other sort of therapy or holistic approach," Rauthe said.

But given all that, Rauthe said her business primarily has attracted women between the ages of 30 and 50, not because she's marketing to them specifically but because they seem a little more open to trying something new.

Rauthe said she would like to work more with athletes because she thinks many of them put too much stock in their athletic ability and don't know how to balance the rest of their lives, or they are injured and become desperate when their athleticism is gone.

"I've just seen so many tragic stories (about athletes) and felt so many times that I could have helped," Rauthe said.

Coaching sessions normally last from 60 to 75 minutes and can take place either in her downtown Missoula office or over the phone. Rauthe said her method is more scientific in that it helps a client become more "bilateral in their brain."

What that means is that the client ultimately will strengthen his or her ability to think with both the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

"So much of our frustrations are because we are only thinking about a problem from a logical or analytical perspective," Rauthe explained. "If we were able to get into our right brain and see it from a more creative and innovative perspective and collaborate those two ways of thinking we could see the whole picture."

Rauthe said results often are apparent after just one session. She simply "bounces" the client back and forth, question by question. She doesn't offer any advice until the end of the session and only after getting a client's permission to do so.

"This coaching process . . . is so results-oriented," Rauthe said. "Oftentimes people find themselves in therapy or in counseling and there's really no end in sight. You could go on and on and on for months or years and you never really know when it's gonna be done."

Her method requires a commitment to a minimum of eight sessions.

"The longer you go the more quickly you're going to see results to your obstacles," Rauthe said. "After that it's really a choice if you want to keep working on new things."

Toward the end of each session Rauthe hopes to offer suggestions that the client can think about between sessions. She might suggest a book the client should read or some type of exercise that could help.

"I usually give two or three different suggestions and that way usually the client will feel comfortable with at least one of them," Rauthe explained, adding that she also sends a client away with some homework to do prior to their next get-together.

At first it was a bit challenging coming up with clients, but since getting started Rauthe has relied heavily on referrals. She provides incentives to clients who refer other people to her.

She also has done some advertising and has a Web site with two different links she called "very basic" because computers aren't her strong suit.

"It's going pretty well," Rauthe said of her business. "It's definitely what I want to be doing."

Rauthe doesn't foresee growing the business to the point where she would have to hire another coach. Instead she would prefer to cap her numbers and only add clients when there is an opening.

What she is looking forward to is doing seminars that would get the word out about what she does.

"There are some processes that individuals can do at home that are fun and very effective, so I'd love to teach people those skills," Rauthe said.

She'd also like to branch out into group coaching with families, businesses or teams.

Rauthe feels strongly about why people should be open to life coaching.

"If you've ever had a glimpse of what your authentic self feels like, that's what coaching can bring you," she said. "It's a real gift to yourself if there's something nagging at you that you know could feel better in your life.

"I'm just there to help you figure out how to make that aspect of your life feel better and more authentic."

Rauthe said she's had clients buy coaching sessions as gifts for others they know. She said she's always willing to negotiate her rates because she doesn't want anyone to be deterred from giving life coaching a try.

"That's one of the benefits of working for myself," she said. "I can make that choice. I can give it away for free or I can set my price. It all balances out."

Rauthe said with the season of New Year's resolutions approaching she looks forward to helping people fulfill those resolutions.

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