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WITH KAREN



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## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A HEALTH COACH?

While considering a midlife career change, I looked for gaps in the delivery of health care in the United States. I noticed a need for more hands-on guidance, support and accountability around the health behavior change process. Clinicians often make recommendations to their patients about lifestyle modifications that could improve quality of life and overall life expectancy, but the clinicians generally don’t have enough time in an office visit to give these topics the attention they deserve. I was inspired by the growing body of scientific research demonstrating the utility of health coaching in increasing patient engagement and improving health outcomes.

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

There’s nothing more gratifying than helping people build a bridge between their current habits and the lifestyle they wish to achieve. There’s no single way to achieve a healthier lifestyle. People start in different places and follow different paths. I love the professional challenge of working with people at a variety of ages and life stages. My days are quite varied. I might design a health promotion program for undergraduates at Princeton University in the morning and then coach clients at a doctor’s office in the afternoon.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST FACTOR IN CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE?

In my view, people can sustain healthy behaviors when they focus on three key areas:

1. **Consistency.** Set perfection aside, and focus on repeating a few important healthy behaviors most days of the week.
2. **Resilience.** Accept that temptations are a part of life, and allow yourself to bounce back and get back on track quickly.
3. **Prioritizing.** Recognize that healthier habits don’t just happen. Lasting change is an active process.

## DO YOU HAVE A CLIENT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

It is a joy to work with any client engaged in the health behavior change process! I work with people battling obesity and/or tobacco dependence. Even though I am thrilled when clients reach their goal weight or get rid of their last pack of cigarettes, I also take great pride in

the smaller steps that lead to the end result. For example, a recent client rediscovered her hidden athlete after decades of avoiding the gym. She increased her strength and stamina, and now she has a constructive and gratifying way to manage her stress.

## HOW DO YOU STAY HEALTHY IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

To ensure credibility with clients, I think it is important to walk the talk. I want to be a role model, follow my own advice, and implement many of the behaviors and mindsets I discuss with my own clients. Sometimes I’ll ask myself what I’d tell a client about issues that come up in my own life.

## WHAT’S THE NUMBER-ONE REASON PEOPLE COME TO YOU FOR HEALTH COACHING?

Maintaining a healthy weight or quitting tobacco are common items on people’s wish lists. People come to me when they want wishes to become a reality, having usually tried—unsuccessfully—to lose weight or stop smoking on their own. Together we break the process down into achievable steps.