

Case Study: Jennifer F

What was the problem/situation which drew you to seek out Coach DQ's services?

After two years in an advertising job that wasn't going anywhere, I was in a rut unlike any rut I'd ever experienced. I was working with a client who wasn't treating me well at all, and my boss had decided that not only should I suck up to the client, I should view this experience as a test to see if I was "happy" with the company.

Happiness. That was a big thing for my boss. He had an instinct for it, but not in a good way. The moment I started feeling unhappy, he'd hone in on it, and try to exploit it. Rather than managing my issues—like my problem with the client—he would insinuate that this might not be the right job for me anymore. This had the effect of compounding the frustration I was already feeling.

After a while, my rut became a valley. Instead of looking for a new job with a more supportive boss, I tried to combat my boss when he sniffed out my unhappiness. In the end, I ended up hurting myself more than I hurt him, and I found myself in need of some serious self-repair and outside perspective.

A good friend of mine suggested that I work with Dawn, because Dawn's coaching had really helped her accept responsibility for the situation she'd been in, and move on. Coaching sounded like just what I needed.

What specific issues did you hope to address with your coaching sessions?

The first thing I wanted to concentrate on was rebuilding my self-esteem. My boss's habit of making everything my fault had really done a number on my confidence and judgment. I've always known myself to be a positive, capable person, but I had allowed those qualities to erode. I knew it would be difficult to interview and secure a new job without self esteem intact.

Second, I wanted to define what I wanted to do with my life—or at least what I wanted to do next. I was feeling confused about marketing as a profession and felt overwhelmed by the notion of a "career" that would span the rest of my life. I was also fearful that I would land a new job, but wind up feeling unfulfilled again in another year or two. I'd held six marketing jobs in ten years, but I didn't have a sense of purpose in my job choices. And, I was frustrated by the fact that although I spent a lot of time working—even to the point of sacrificing my own healthy creative outlets—I was still unsatisfied

Finally, I wanted to learn to set boundaries and establish ways in which I could deal effectively with difficult people—like my former client.

What was the best part of the coaching experience for you?

The best part of the coaching experience for me was that I no longer felt alone. I've always been encouraged and empowered by supportive friends and family to navigate life as I saw fit; I never thought I would "fail" at being happy. But the truth, for me, is that that empowerment can be overwhelming without tools and proper guidance. The structure of my weekly meetings with Dawn kept me accountable for what I was supposed to be thinking about, and gave me the thing that matters most to my success: time to reflect.

What was the most challenging part of the coaching experience for you?

The most challenging aspect of the process for me was to be disciplined about making time each week for the coaching. I was really great at it in the beginning, but after I landed my new job, I began to put a lot of pressure on myself to have some sort of "status update"—some progress on which to report. There were times when I would have a strong urge to cancel our call, because I hadn't accomplished our objective from the week before. But Dawn reminded me that the process isn't always linear, and that learning happens both during and outside of calls. I still worry that I'm not maximizing my time with her, but I now have a better understanding that my time with her is also time I give to myself to keep my life balanced and fulfilling—regardless of what I may or may not have accomplished. In many ways, I've discovered, taking this time for myself *is* an accomplishment!

Was the issue you originally intended to work on resolved through your coaching sessions?

Yes, my core issues were resolved through the coaching process. But more important even than the problems solved are the valuable skills and tools I learned—including the ability to clarify what I can and cannot control. These help me navigate the workplace in a healthier way. I know now how to consciously put myself in situations where I can succeed.

What was the outcome of your work with Coach DQ? Did it meet your expectations?

Here are what I perceive to be my key outcomes as a result of my work with Dawn:

- I've gained self-confidence. Dawn's tactic of asking, "What evidence can you identify that leads you to that conclusion," was a great reminder that sometimes my perception of a situation can not only be destructive to my self-esteem; it may not even be reality.

- I am less intimidated by the notion of a “career.” Now, I see a career as something in hindsight and retrospect. What’s more important is being aware of who I am today, and having a job I enjoy.
- I’ve learned not to take everything personally. On Dawn’s recommendation, I purchased Richard Carson’s book, *Tame Your Gremlin*. After reading it, I learned to differentiate between the Gremlin in my head, and my better judgment, which has helped tremendously.
- I realize that I need a professional mentor (not necessarily my boss) who can serve in the role of coach on an ongoing basis.
- I have a greater appreciation for the power of creative visualization. It’s one of the best ways to achieve what I want. Whether I use a vision board or meditation, the process is an anchor for me, especially for when life gets chaotic and confusing.
- I’ve landed a great job marketing the arts. It is at an appropriate level for my skills, and I am marketing something I’ve always loved. During the interview process, I was able to deliberately assess cultural and managerial fit.
- Finally, even though I love my job, I am acutely aware that it does not have to serve as the sole definition of who I am.

I am not quite done with my coaching experience, so I’m not sure what the remaining month will bring, but overall, I would absolutely recommend working with a career coach to anyone who is feeling a bit lost in the process. I am confident in my new skills, and would love to revisit this experience in a year or two, to see how these lessons progress for me over time.