

**Press Release: June 2011**

**Headline: Bridge of Hope Life Coach Helping Victims Reach New Heights**

Weathering the storm during these tough economic times can be a struggle for many people but for one Belfast born mother and motivational guru the answer is to bring ‘life coaching to the masses’.

As a technique that doesn’t claim to be a form of counselling but more a forward-thinking workout for the heart and mind using the processes of goal setting, the success of life coaching is undeniable Leah McStravick believes.

“Coaching is for everyone. Coaching creates improvements. Coaching creates positive living,” she explains.

“Pick anybody off the street anywhere, and tell me they can’t benefit from improvement somewhere in their life.

“Everybody wants to naturally develop themselves and that saying of ‘natural, creative, resourceful and whole’ is absolutely what I embrace so when a person comes in, I know that it’s going to be successful.

“I know we’re going to have a brilliant relationship, so I embrace the fact that we will be successful in our sessions so it’s always going to work.”

Due to unforeseen financial worries, redundancies and income loss the chance to build on your own existing resources and natural talents should be the easiest thing in the world for people to pinpoint.

As a life coach with years of experience under her belt, Leah knows sometimes people need help to do this. This case becomes even stronger if the obstacles are borne out of years of conflict related stress and trauma.

At the Bridge of Hope, a victims and survivors organisation that aims to help those most affected by the conflict, life coaching is an integral part of its service delivery.

Alongside complementary therapies and personal development courses Bridge of Hope have been helping to increase awareness of this important coaching technique at its outreach centres in both West and North Belfast for several years now. Success amongst Bridge of Hope’s clients so far has been overwhelming.

“The best case scenario I have had is that this has changed my life completely,” Leah explained.

“I have had a lot of people, that would have had traumas in the past linked to the Troubles and on that basis they recognise they can’t change the past but they can change how they behave in the present and how they perceive what has happened to them in the past.

“[Coaching] helps them be able to move forward with a positive mental attitude, with less hurt and more determination to create a better present and a more positive future not only for themselves but for their families and for people within their community who have experienced a lot of similar things. And it’s difficult but not impossible to move beyond it, and that’s exactly what we have done for a lot of clients.”

The opportunity to speak to a professional coach represents one of the best personal development decisions you can make Leah adds.

“I think [coaching] it can benefit anyone who is ready and willing to move on to the next stage of their life even if you don’t know what that is, come along and see a coach and a coach can help you identify what that next stage is. “Emotionally and mentally people can feel stuck, not sure which direction to take. They could have a particularly traumatic past, so they’re not sure how to move on from that. They may feel it’s right to see a counsellor but once they have gone into the past and rectified what impact that has had, it’s very easy to come along and see a coach and move forward.”

The answers are there within the person Leah firmly believes

“Everyone has been a winner in some shape or form in a previous life and everyone will be a winner in the present and in the future. It’s mapping across those strengths, it’s knowing what you’re good at, and everyone has strengths and everyone has what I would call opportunities to develop. I fundamentally believe that all clients have the answers within themselves it’s just sometimes you need a coach to help you draw those out.”

**If you would like to find out more about Bridge of Hope and its services ring our Bridge of Hope team on 02890 221022 or 028 95438707. Bridge of Hope offers life coaching in a variety of locations including Sally Gardens in West Belfast and McSweeney Centre in Henry Place.**