

# Your Personal Coach

By

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

**Dear Kathleen,**

**Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, I've really tried to change my priorities and spend more time with my wife and kids. For a few weeks after the terrorist attacks, I knew what mattered most to me – my family. We spent a lot of great time doing things together. But, I own my own business. I travel a lot and there is always so much to do. Now I'm back in the same old rut of working too many hours, spending too many nights away from home, and not having enough time for my wife and children. How can I get back on track?**

**-- William**

Dear William,

The tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 was a wake-up call for almost everyone. In a single terrible moment, most people experienced the gut-level realization that life is more transient and fragile than we believed. In the ensuing hours and days, most of us reevaluated our priorities, and many of us made dramatic changes in living those priorities.

Did you know that a Gallup poll, conducted shortly after that horrific day, showed that more than one-third of Americans said that the terrorist attacks were a “life-altering” event, and that they were going to change the way they lived? Not one survey suggested that people had an awakened desire to make more money or acquire more things or greater status.

Like you, most people had a heightened appreciation of the importance of their family and friends. And like you, many vowed to spend more of their time with their loved ones.

Were these new insights, a change in consciousness we've collectively experienced? Or a momentary interruption in “life as usual”? Do they represent a sea change in how we will live?

What is clear is that no one was unaffected by the tragedies of that day. Whether we will *live* those new values in our real, personal, and everyday lives is not so clear. Will the changes in priorities and values we've experienced stick for the long run? To me, the jury is still out on that question.

Ironically and tragically, one of the heroes of United Airlines Flight 93, who was killed when that plane crashed in rural Pennsylvania, was trying to do in his life just what you are now trying to do in yours. Before he and his courageous fellow passengers charged the terrorists, and before he uttered those now-famous and inspirational words, “Let's Roll,” Todd Beamer was tired of leaving his family for business. He was only on Flight 93 because he had postponed a sales trip by a day in order to spend more time with his young sons. He planned to catch the red-eye home later that night. Tragically his resolve, and his life – like those of so many other innocent people – were extinguished by a brutal act of violence.

If there is anything positive that can come from that heart-breaking day of September 11<sup>th</sup>, it will be in this reappraisal of how we want to live – a blossoming of new values and priorities -- along with a willingness to make real changes. William, you're wise to not want to go back to the same rut. Your family needs you, and you need them. Make time for the people you love. Tell them just how much you love them, and do so every day. Read to them the letter you just wrote to me, so they'll understand what you are trying to do. You'll find that they will be touched by your deep desire to spend more time with them. They can also help you brainstorm ways to make this happen.

Find ways of working smarter, not longer. Delegate some responsibilities to others. Find creative ways to reduce your travel and still accomplish what needs to be done. Think outside the box on this one. Simplify your life. Learn to live better with less income. Make conscious choices about what is most important. Do whatever you have to do to provide for your family AND have time for them.

You will have to use your intelligence and your emotion – your head and your heart – to find the right balance between your family and your work.

I remember reading an old New England saying in a Farmer's Almanac. It said, "Farm like you'll live forever and live like you'll die tomorrow." That's a nice turn of phrase, to be sure, but not so easy to do. Achieving balance requires vigilance and new decisions. But it all begins with your own thoughts and feelings.

An Eastern proverb reminds us that our futures are determined by the decisions we make today:

Watch Your Thoughts, For They Become Words, Choose Your Words,  
For They Become Actions, Understand Your Actions, For They Become  
Habits. Study Your Habits, For They Become Your Character, Develop  
Your Character, For It Becomes Your Destiny.

Good luck to you, William.

Send your personal coaching questions to [kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com](mailto:kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com), call 473-4004, or direct questions to the Outer Banks Sentinel, P.O. Box 546, Nags Head, NC 27949

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