

# Atlanta

ATLANTAMAGAZINE.COM



## SEARCH

  
Atlanta Magazine 

## WEB EXCLUSIVES

### >> WHAT IS THIS?

**Private Schools Directory**  
Our interactive database of Atlanta-area independent schools.

**Best New Restaurants**  
The city's newest dining gems.

**Top Doctors**  
Our list of Atlanta's most trusted physicians.

**The Best for Your Pets**  
Top vets, trainers, treats, and more.

## 101 GUIDES

The following are available as downloadable PDFs and require **Adobe Reader**

- 101 Spas & Salons**
- 101 Shops**
- 101 Restaurants**

## BLOG INDEX

## ABOUT US

## EDITORS' PICKS

## READER SERVICES





**CUSTOM PUBLISHING**  
 Atlanta magazine is one of the largest custom publishers in Atlanta. Atlanta magazine's Custom Publishing division produces turnkey publications for several organizations  
 >>[LEARN MORE](#)

## Life Coaches: Helping Hand or Spiritual Scam?

Contributing writer Suzanne Kayes Oliver gets a firsthand look at life coaching.

Last year was tough. I lost both grandmothers, had to put my cat down, changed jobs, bought a house, and got married. Every Internet stress test I took gave the same advice: Take action now or risk coming down with a stress-related illness. One website straight up advised me to seek therapy.

Instead of sessions with a shrink, I signed up for a class called "Get the Life You Love" at the Emory Center for Lifelong Learning. Instructor and certified life coach Patrice Dickey has taught nineteen of these six-week courses since 1999. There were sixteen of us that first Wednesday night session, everyone self-conscious. I was still skeptical about the whole life-coaching business. Was it legit? What kind of credentials does it take to call yourself a coach?

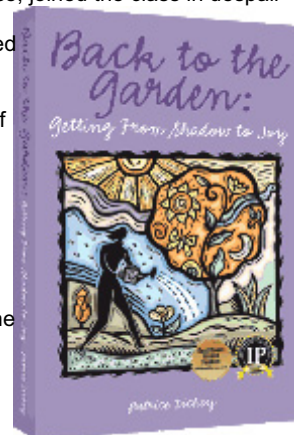
My skepticism wasn't assuaged when Dickey kicked things off with the obligatory cheesy icebreaker: What animal would you be and why? While others gave the cliché answers of free birds and lazy dogs, I said an alligator. "Well, they're pretty darn resilient, and they're not intimidated by anything or anyone," I said in response to the quizzical looks.

Despite that awkward start, by the end of the first two-hour session, I really started to get a feel for the group. It was mostly introverts and mostly women. Primarily they were middle-aged professionals. (Surprisingly, one guy was even a psychologist.) Some were down in the pits, struggling with rocky marriages and stagnant careers. Some just needed a shift in perspective. It was reassuring to realize that basically, we all wanted the same thing: a fulfilling life.

With Dickey as our guide, over the next six weeks, we explored our sources of frustration and our fears of failure and rejection. Sometimes we filled out self-inquiry worksheets (What three things would you most like to change about your life if you had no restrictions or limitations? What do you want your legacy to be? What three activities do you find most enjoyable?); sometimes we talked openly about being our own worst enemies. For one assignment, we had to list a hundred personal strengths. Perhaps it's telling that I got stuck after number twenty. In session three, we regressed to kindergarten with crayons and scissors, creating treasure maps, or the "vision boards" made famous by *The Secret*. We cut out and pasted magazine pictures and catchphrases that represented our ideal lives—from family and friends to career and spirituality. The idea behind this exercise is that we would start to attract what we focused on.

In Dickey's 2006 self-help guide *Back to the Garden: Getting From Shadow to Joy*, she writes about students who made miraculous shifts in their lives. Robbie, for instance, joined the class in despair over the loss of her sister to cancer. She was also an empty-nester and was feeling stuck. She wasn't exactly sure why, but Robbie pasted a picture of a chef on her treasure map. Something about it appealed to her, as she had enjoyed preparing holistic meals for her sick sister. In a twist of fate, she later received a piece of e-mail spam, a roster of culinary schools in New York. She considered it a sign and enrolled. Today she's a holistic chef. "I have actually changed my attitude from feeling at times hopeless that I would ever find my authentic life," she told Dickey, "to feeling optimistic that indeed I will find a purposeful and fulfilling life."

Dickey, a former Dale Carnegie sales training instructor, is one of the most positive people I've ever met. So it was pretty shocking when she revealed her tumultuous youth. Her mother was a depressive bipolar alcoholic, and a terrible accident rendered her a quadriplegic when Dickey was in her twenties. As a result, Dickey plunged into self-destruct mode, but she gradually turned her life around, determined not to wallow in self-pity.



Coaches come from all sorts of backgrounds but usually share one common trait: having been through lots of counseling themselves. "In order to be a coach, you have to have been coached," says Melissa Galt, a local life coach, speaker, and author who's incorporated her interior design business into a package called "Designing Your Signature Life." She believes people's physical environment has a huge impact on their psyche, and just as a person can bring beauty and balance to a chaotic room, he can do the same thing for his daily life.

Diagnosed with long-term depression, Galt reinvented her life about fifteen years ago. She was taking the corporate world of hospitality purchasing by storm, making plenty of money, but was absolutely miserable and leading a life in line with her mother's vision instead of her own. (Galt's mother is Academy Award-winning actress Anne Baxter. Her great-grandfather was architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and her godmother was Hollywood costume designer Edith Head. Imagine the pressure.)

At age thirty, Galt started over. Three years ago, she began coaching clients, discovering that many of them just try to do too much. "There's no virtue in doing it all," she says. People—especially women and entrepreneurs—are pulled in too many directions, she says, and need to focus.

"Many just need someone who will hold them accountable," she adds, describing how a coach helps harried clients ignore the "white noise" of too much to do. So what's the difference between a life coach and a shrink? Doesn't a psychologist get paid to listen and empathize, too? As with therapy, the life-coaching client gets to steer the focus of the conversation. Many coaches require a

ADVERTISEMENT

ATLANTA MAG

Atlanta Magazine's 10 best restaurants in Atlanta  
 March 10, 2008  
 Cobb Galleria Centre

MORE

ATLANTA



MOR

Fall Travel Guide



Is "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"?

 Yes No

Vote

Results From Last

Who should be responsible for helping the homeless?

The mayor and local

Nonprofits and the private sector

42

month-by-month commitment, while others let the clients decide how often to meet—once a week, once a month, once in a blue moon.

The main difference is that life coaches don't dredge up a client's past. Rather than analyzing past events that could have caused problems, they focus on the future and specific plans for change. They help clients commit goals to paper and then form a plan of action.

Ten out of sixteen stuck it out through the last Emory class where everyone had to share how he or she had shifted. For me, it was realizing my perfectionism was hurting me, not encouraging me. As for my take on life coaching, I think that anything that makes you feel even a tad better is worth a shot. Heck, as Dickey pointed out to me, even Tiger Woods has a coach.

## The Coach FAQ

### How do I find a life coach?

Sites such as coachinc.com, coachfederation.org, and gacoaches.com offer referrals. Schedule informational interviews with several potential coaches to find the right rapport.

### What kinds of credentials should I look for?

Certifications through the International Coach Federation and Worldwide Association of Business Coaches as well as coaching, mentoring, and training accreditation. Granted there are others, as the certification process continues to evolve.

### How do I know if a coach is the real deal?

Don't bother looking for an academic degree. It's an unregulated field, and many of the roughly 50,000 life coaches in the country do not have extensive training. Still, there are programs and institutes, like the International Coach Federation, that offer credentials and clinical training. It's important to ask exactly what a potential coach's certification means. In addition to asking for references, also ask if they've spent years honing their craft or mere months.

### What's the difference between a class and one-on-one coaching?

Obviously, there's less individual attention, but students still get a grasp of what coaching is and do many of the same exercises. Think of it as a precursor to the real thing, or as group therapy compared with solo sessions.

### What kinds of things do you talk about with a life coach?

Dead-end jobs, failed relationships, traumatic losses, overall sense of confusion and emptiness.

### Where do I start?

Most likely your coach will ask you to rate certain areas of your personal and professional life. Topics include finances, health, spirituality, communication skills, commitment to growth, and time management.

### What kinds of things will I do with the coach?

Typically, you will engage in some kind of exercise that stimulates self-discovery and action. Examples include journal writing, mission statements, personal crests, introspective worksheets, goal charts, and recommended reading.

### Where do we meet?

Usually at the coach's office or home. Many also do appointments over the phone.

### What does it cost?

One-on-one coaching is \$100 to \$300 an hour; not covered by insurance

## Local life coaches and their costs and credentials:

### Chloe Taylor Brown

Life by Design Power Coach, Perfecting Your Authentic Image program  
Charges \$200 an hour  
chloetaylorbrown.com, 404-256-4228

### Robert E. Dallas

Executive coach and licensed professional counselor  
Charges \$700 a month for three personal sessions plus some phone consultation  
redallas@bellsouth.net, 770-337-3243

### Patrice Dickey

Registered corporate coach and qualified Myers-Briggs Type Indicator specialist  
Charges between \$125 and \$300 an hour  
patricedickey.com, 404-294-9333

### Melissa Galt

Certified life dream coach  
Charges \$250 an hour  
melissagalt.com, 404-812-4613

### Jim Withers

Business and Executive coach and Myers-Briggs specialist  
Charges \$150 an hour, packages available  
withersj@mindspring.com 404-876-9183

### Get the Life You Love

The next six-week course at the Emory Center for Lifelong Learning, taught by Patrice Dickey, starts on February 12 through March 18 from 7 to 9 p.m. To register, log onto [patricedickey.com](http://patricedickey.com) or [eveningatemory.com](http://eveningatemory.com). The cost is \$140. She's also teaching the course at the Fulton County Schools Center for Lifelong Learning in Roswell beginning February 9 for \$199. To register, log onto [conted.clayton.edu/fulton](http://conted.clayton.edu/fulton).



*Patrice Dickey*



*Melissa Galt*

#### ADVERTISEMENTS

##### **Atlanta Magazine Subscription**

Subscribe today to Atlanta magazine!

##### **Highland Lake Inn - Variety of Rooms & Cottages**

Contact us at 866-303-9621.

##### **Spa Week**

\$50 Full-Service Spa Treatments

---

**[ABOUT US](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [ADVERTISE WITH US](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [TERMS OF SERVICE](#)**