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INDIANA LIVING

Balancing Act: Ellen Miller
 Change means sometimes having to say goodbye
 August 2, 2004

How do you know when it's time to change your life? Listen to your heart, mind and gut, says Julie Searles, an Indianapolis life coach who transformed her professional life four years ago. If you don't, your body will tell you something's wrong. You'll feel drained. You may get more colds, headaches or stomachaches.

What keeps us from taking steps, however small, toward change?

Fear, say Searles and others who coach people through life changes. We worry that if we dare to do something different, disaster will follow.

"People have such wonderful imaginations. It can be very vivid in a nightmare kind of way," says [Barry Zweibel](#), a business coach in Northbrook, Ill.

He suggests talking through or writing about worst-case scenarios. Then we can see options and develop fall-back positions.

Searles says many clients come to her knowing they are unhappy and want change, but they feel torn.

"It's like we have two selves. One is the social self and it says, 'This is what I should do. I should be happy with this.' The input may come from authority figures, the culture in general or peers.

"Then there's this intrinsic part of ourselves, our soul, our spirit, our essential self. It knows there are certain things we're really good at. It knows what we find fun."

It knows when we cling to the status quo out of fear.

But we don't have to live that way.

"When you are in your essential self, you have high energy, good health," says Searles. "It's easy for you to focus and concentrate on what you do; things just seem to work out."

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To get there, you don't have to be able to afford coaching sessions that might cost \$100 each, says Natalie Gahrmann, a New Jersey-based coach who focuses on work/life-balance issues.

"There are lots of good books and resources, such as 'What Color is My Parachute' or 'Do What You Love and the Money Will Follow,' " says Gahrmann. "Or you might use journaling, a workshop or a networking association,"

Searles came to coaching four years ago. She had spent 15 years as a financial consultant for a financial-services firm before taking an extended break to raise three children.

When her kids were older, she wanted to return to employment, but not to her former occupation.

The idea of becoming a coach emerged as she noticed what fulfilled her. She was a certified bereavement facilitator through volunteer work for the Brooke's Place center for grieving children. She trained in gestalt therapy. Through her trainer, she met a life coach and decided to become one.

Clients include financial-services managers, college students and anyone wanting help to change their life.

"A lot of people think they can't take Step A until they get Step B figured out. But we can do it a step at a time. What happens is, you get halfway through the process and a door opens, someone calls or something materializes."

Funny how it works that way, once we're willing to let go of the status quo.

I guess this is a long way of saying that I'm going through my own changes. This is my last Balancing Act column. In a few weeks, I'll start writing for The Star's Home & Garden section.

For three years, I've had the privilege of telling stories of women, myself included, struggling to create full, rich lives. I've loved meeting you in e-mails, phone calls and in person.

It's hard to say goodbye, but my heart, mind and gut tell me it's time for change. I hope I've created a body of work that touches on some truths of modern family life.

I wish you all the best in your own journey. Thanks for reading.

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