

# Integrative Health Coaching:

What it is and how it can help you achieve your optimal health vision

By Deborah Lee, PhD, RN

**N**ational Breast Cancer Awareness month is a good time to remember the role healthy eating and activity play in cancer prevention. Given our hectic lives, it is not always easy to do the things we know are important to achieve optimal health. Integrative health coaching can assist you in making your optimal health vision a reality.

## Ask yourself these questions:

- Have you tried to adopt new health habits but haven't been successful?
- Did your doctor tell you that lifestyle changes would help you?
- Do you wish you had more energy and less stress so you can do all of things you want to do?
- Do you feel stuck?
- Have you made some changes but haven't been able to get where you want to be, or feel how you want to feel?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, integrative health coaching may be just what you need. Integrative health coaching is not just about your physical well-being, it is about you as a whole person: your values, goals, work, balance, fulfillment, and life purpose. The focus of integrative health coaching is on helping you make sustainable change; changes you can make for the long-term.

An integrative health coach will help you clarify your health and well-being goals and develop a plan to adopt and maintain health behaviors, choices and attitudes to help you achieve optimal health. You receive guidance in developing a plan that works for you along with the support, motivation and accountability to help sustain the change over time. An integrative health coach can also assist you in reducing negative impacts of chronic conditions, such as heart disease, arthritis, cancer and diabetes.



**Why Integrative Health Coaching?**

The role of the integrative health coach was created to fill the gap that currently exists in our health care system to help people make long-term lifestyle changes to improve their health and well-being. As much as physicians would like to provide guidance, support and motivation to their patients who want to make healthy lifestyle changes, they do not have time to do this within the constraints of an office visit. Historically, people have been on their own to make these changes with no one exploring what works for their life or what is important to them in order to make these changes.

The integrative health coach deals with the ambivalence that often comes with behavior change and helps the individual link this change to something they care about and something they want for themselves. The integrative health coach's approach is centered on what the person wants, and by being centered on the person and their desires for their life, behavior change is more likely to result.

**How Does It Work?**

The two factors that impact individual success when working with an integrative health coach are the individual's readiness to change and the relationship between the individual and the coach. This is why it is important entering into the coaching relationship to know you are ready to make a change in your life and to form a solid foundation of trust and confidence with a qualified coach.

The coaching process is driven by the individual, not by the coach. An integrative health coach does not tell you what to eat to lose weight or tell you how to exercise. An integrative health coach is an expert in sustainable behavior change and can provide information and resources to help you investigate options, but does not tell you what to do, because if it isn't important to you, then you won't do it.

We know the paradigm we've been using, in which the medical professional tells the patient/client what to do, does not work. If it did, all of us would do all the healthy things our health care provider tells us we should do. The integrative health coach works with the individual as a partner, not as the expert telling the individual what they should do and how they should do it. Take charge of your life and health by partnering with an integrative health coach to help you achieve the life you've envisioned.



**Deborah Lee, PhD, RN** is an Integrative Health Coach and President of Better Choices Health Coaching based in Naples. She received her training at Duke Integrative Medicine's Integrative Health Coach Professional Training Program where she is currently working towards certification as an Integrative Health Coach. She brings 30 years of professional and personal experience to her integrative health coaching practice. After working as a hospital and home care nurse, researcher, college professor, public health professional and health care administrator in the U.S. and Canada, she decided to return to the root of why she became a nurse; to help people feel better and stay healthy. Deborah can be reached at [Deborah.Lee@BetterChoicesHealthCoaching.com](mailto:Deborah.Lee@BetterChoicesHealthCoaching.com)