

## THE VILLAGES

### Local wellness coach on a mission of awareness

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By Marian Collins SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWS

The big holiday is behind you. The wrapping papers are crumpled up and bagged for garbage day. The toys are put together and ready for play.

But what about your stress level? Are you worried that you overindulged, overspent or worse, overcharged? You're probably not alone and unless you have some healthy means for processing it, stress could eventually take its toll on your health.

Lifestyle and wellness coach Rebecca Cohen is making it her mission to help people develop healthy solutions for coping with life's challenges. Her Sycamore business, Partnering For Change Wellness Coaching, is designed with the client in mind.

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#### Empowering people

"My job is to help empower people," said Cohen who has been involved in health education through more than 30 years of nursing and teaching at the college level. Just a little more than three years ago she felt the time had come for a change in her own life. That's when she decided to make a commitment to getting board certified as a holistic nurse and lifestyle and wellness coach.

"It was the most difficult journey of my life in some ways," said Cohen who went back to school and traveled the country to learn the various non-traditional therapies involved in her new passion including reiki, quantum touch and Heartmath.

"I've always been involved in complimentary therapies," said Cohen whose mother was a nurse and father was a doctor.

Today Cohen is thrilled to be part of a specialty recognized only recently by the American Nursing Association.

"Holistic nursing is a commitment to taking care of the whole person, mind, body and spirit, and caring for yourself," said Cohen, adding that coaching the holistic philosophy seemed like such a natural path at a time in her nursing career when she was feeling overwhelmed and over scheduled.

"When you're by the bedside, you have to be there in a place of peace and a place of health, otherwise you cannot provide the care and you won't have the energy or be a role model."

### **Lifestyle changes**

Cohen's clients aren't people who just want to lose 10 pounds. They can be healthy people who simply want to increase their performance, but they're also individuals who've decided to do something about their weight, blood pressure, stress, unhappiness or overall lifestyle.

"They just get ready," said Cohen.

Wellness coaching addresses five areas: exercise, nutrition, stress management, weight management and disease risk reduction. With Cohen's encouragement and inspiration, clients set their own goals and are provided with the tools and resources to achieve them.

Before taking on a new client she offers a free 30-minute phone consultation to assess their needs and determine if they will benefit from her instruction.

"Coaching is not for everybody," said Cohen adding that some clients just get to the point where they say, "I don't want my life like this anymore."

### **Stress management**

Stress management is an important part of Cohen's wellness coaching. She uses a proven tool called Heartmath to transform perceived stress and help clients learn to cope more effectively.

"We respond with the emotions of danger even when there's no danger there," said Cohen referring to the stress of any minor incident that may initiate the release of the cortisol hormone into the bloodstream from the adrenal glands. A small cortisol release can be helpful in survival situations providing a quick boost of energy, lowering sensitivity to pain, and helping maintain homeostasis by bringing blood to where the body needs it to prepare for the "fight or flight" response.

Chronic stress, perhaps from the workplace or even at home, is when cortisol is being released for prolonged periods of time. Lowered immunity, impaired thinking, blood sugar imbalances, decrease in muscle tissue and high blood pressure are a few of the negative effects of cortisol.

"It makes us look and feel bad," said Cohen.

Heartmath teaches clients to create dramatic changes in the heart's rhythms using a little technology and a little technique.

"We live in a world that's so blessed with everything and people are feeling worse and worse," said Cohen whose Heartmath methods get clients to be grateful for the positives in their lives, no matter how small.

"This is the most powerful thing I've ever done," was one client's comment about Heartmath along with, "it changes the way I look at the world and myself."

### **Work done by phone**

While most of Cohen's work is done by telephone, she is committed to educating as many people as she can outside of her business about the association between lifestyle and wellness. She gives free presentations to move listeners from the "I don't have a problem" phase to what's termed as the recognition phase, where they say, "I have a problem and maybe I'll do something."

A Sycamore resident since age 4, Cohen and her late husband raised two sons who graduated from Northern Illinois University. Medical professions seems to run in the family as her son Josh is a physical therapist in North Carolina and son Aaron is a physician in Lake Zurich.

Learn more about Partnering For Change Wellness Coaching and read Cohen's extensive list of credentials at [www.partneringforchange.com](http://www.partneringforchange.com) or call (815) 895-9389. **Sycamore**