

# Well & good

## Express yourself

As the strength of his New Year's resolutions starts to wane, *Mark Smith* goes in search of reinforcements at Amsterdam life coaching service Happiness Express



**Happy talk:** Sarah gets Mark on track for achievement

Life coach Sarah Fraser of Happiness Express describes her client base as Amsterdam's 'worried well'. That is, people who are beyond the need for therapy, but for whom there still 'remains a gap between where you are and where you want to be'.

The gaps in my own, largely functional, existence would make for a broadcast-unworthy episode of 'The Jerry Springer Show'. My 'worry', shared by many of Fraser's clients, is procrastination. Tax returns, friendly phone calls, unwritten novels, attending yoga classes and quitting smoking... There's always tomorrow, right? Sadly, tomorrow always seems to come with its own 'to do' list.

The purpose of my 90-minute introductory session with Fraser is to establish which of these neglected areas can be 'actioned' to happiness-promoting effect and how. She invites me to construct a sort of analogue spreadsheet, the

first column of which lists the elements of my life (relationship, health and wellness, finance) in which time-wasting plays a destructive role. She then asks me to rate the severity of my procrastination in each of the fields, followed, crucially, by the 'impact priority' (on a scale of one to ten) of, well, pulling my finger out.

Money, I volunteer, in a rush of beatific self-exposition, is not a motivating factor. Sure, there are bank statements left unopened and freelance writing

jobs left unbilled, but who cares! There's enough money in the bank to put food on my table; everything else is just numbers on a screen.

Not so fast. It turns out that many of life's more tedious obligations could be more appealing if I envisaged them in terms a reward that actually motivates me: catching up with friends over a bottle of wine. My overriding gripe, we establish, is the familiar 'expat lament', that I don't see enough of my dearest, most of whom, geographically speaking, are far from nearest.

The solution? Broadly speaking, I need to stop beating myself up for not dispatching lengthy 'update' emails and resolve to see them more often, for example, by flying to London for a weekend of boozy lunches. The cash that's required can be freed up by ceasing to freelance pro bono and taking my accounting in hand. A virtuous cycle, if you will.

As January has taught me, resolutions are easy to break, but the beauty of Fraser's coaching is that it sets deadlines. As agreed, by the end of the day I've earmarked some cheap flights and started a ledger of outstanding credit. It wasn't exactly fun, but I'm looking forward to toasting the results.

**Happiness Express** (063 932 1209/happinessexpress.nl). A personal coaching session lasts one hour and costs €75. 90-minute introductory sessions are charged at the same rate.

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