

## James Butler's Newsletter #3 November 02

Another month has passed and no doubt you are all wondering what is missing from your life this week - yes, it is time for my next newsletter! In that month the UK has been ravaged by high winds, heavy rains and the first Firefighter's strike since a Brit last won Wimbledon. Halloween has passed and we are now counting down to Thanksgiving and Christmas - only 32 shopping days to the 25th December!!!

Thanks to all those of you who have been passing this newsletter on - I am creeping towards my target of 100 subscribers by Christmas and any further assistance would be greatly appreciated!! If anyone would like to receive previous issues of the newsletter, please click the links at the end.

### Media Mentions

I have been aware of much more information about coaching appearing in the media in the last month. In the USA, an article about an international conference on coaching was on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, and there was a major piece on executive coaching in Business Week.

In the UK, the Sunday Times has printed one or two articles on coaching in business, a BBC1 news magazine in the South had a 10 minute feature on coaching, and life coaching is making an appearance in both Home and Away and Eastenders. (Before anyone comments on how I must be spending my time now I work from home, others have mentioned the soaps to me!!). Even local media are now writing articles, including this one in Derby - [click here to read](#).

Another coaching-related TV programme airing at the moment is BBC2's *Life Laundry* (Wed 8pm), featuring Dawna Walter. Whilst she is not acting as a coach, and her style is certainly not what I would advocate as a trained coach, she does tackle one issue that is fundamental to a lot of coaching. The programme works with the public to de-clutter their lives. Being television, the subjects are extreme cases, but it is an area we could all benefit from addressing, so I have chosen it as this month's coaching idea:

**Keep Britain Tidy** (and other parts of the world - for my overseas subscribers!)

This is not just some reaction to my previous career as a street sweeper, this is a serious idea! Many clients come to understand that as we undertake life's journey, there are often things holding us back, creating friction or bringing 'sludge' into our lives (remember the Tolerations exercise in Issue 1 - which many of you have told me you have been working on?). Well, an untidy or unkempt physical environment creates more of this sludge, reducing our effectiveness and making some things more of a struggle. I guess this is one of the concepts underpinning Feng Shui. How much time do you waste trying to find things on your desk, or in the wardrobe at home? How much energy does it take to shout at the children when you can't find the car keys?

Not only that, but there is a school of thought that external clutter in your life is a manifestation of internal clutter - in your mind or heart. I can think of at least three people reading this who will be spluttering their indignation already (you know who you are!), so in deference to them I also accept that tidiness does not equal effectiveness or happiness either. But the principle of reducing clutter in our lives - physical, mental or emotional, can reduce the 'sludge' holding us back and help us get to another level.

I think emotional and mental clutter can wait for another time, but here are some exercises I have seen or used that could help with the physical clutter:

#### Exercise 1: The JGOWI Approach

Walk around every room in the house, or sit back and look at your desk, and identify the areas where clutter collects. Write the areas in a list. Then think about what this clutter is, why it is collecting, and how you can eliminate it.

From this you should be able to develop a list of actions for clearing the clutter and, more importantly, preventing it from coming back. If you have 200 issues of Angora Rabbit Breeder's Monthly you haven't read, is it time to cancel the subscription? If you have 100 pairs of shoes all over the bedroom floor (or worse, 200 shoes not in pairs), can you get them into a shoe rack, wardrobe shelf or large box?

If you have had a time management coach, you might then prioritise this job list, but otherwise just launch in. Find homes for things you need to keep, and clear out the rest (for competitive disposal options from my former employer visit [www.biffa.co.uk](http://www.biffa.co.uk)!!). Remember, in order to really reduce the sludge in life some of this has to go! As I heard quoted recently, "If the house burnt down tomorrow, would I replace this item?". Sort things into piles - priceless antiques, car boot stuff (if that appeals), charity shop and 'skip'. Be ruthless.

And the next day, marvel at the way you can get in the front door without forcing it past 10 copies of the local free paper, impress your colleagues as you instantly lay your hand on that all important memo from the MD (and it doesn't have coffee stains on). It is easy to jest, but it is also easy to see how small steps on this path can make so much else in life less complicated and more fulfilling.

NB. I accept no liability if readers of this newsletter accidentally jettison family heirlooms, proof of ownership of multi-million stock options or any other valuable items!

For those of you wondering, JGOWI stands for Just Get On With It. :o)

#### Exercise 2: The more structured Clean Sweep © Approach

Coach U, the leading coach training provider produces a number of exercises for coaches to work with clients. One of these is Clean Sweep and it has proven popular with my clients. This works on 4 lists of 25

statements in key areas of life. The idea is that you aim to tick off as many of the 100 statements as you can - if they are true they contribute to a clearer life. Below are a few from the list relating to Physical Environment. How many can you tick off? Of those you can't - which can you address in the next week?

- My personal files, papers and receipts are neatly filed away.
- My car is in excellent condition (doesn't need repairs, cleaning or replacing).
- My home is neat and clean (vacuumed, wardrobes clean, desks and tables clear, furniture in good repair, windows clean).
- My clothes are all ironed, clean and make me look great (no wrinkles, baskets of laundry, torn, out-of-date or ill-fitting clothes).
- My work environment is productive and inspiring.
- I have nothing around the house or in storage that I do not need.

(reproduced from Clean Sweep - copyright Coach U 2002 [www.coachu.com](http://www.coachu.com))

If you would like a full version of the Clean Sweep Programme, please click [here](#) - for copyright reasons I am unable to produce the full list in an e-mail newsletter, but I am happy to provide it to individuals. The first five requests can also have two free 30 minute sessions in December, coaching around the Clean Sweep exercise.

So, the next time I meet any of you, I assume that your home/office/car will be sparkling, tidy and uncluttered! Please, if you try any of these exercises let me know how they go (good or bad) - I would be delighted to know and I will try not to coach you on your responses!!

### **A Simple Man's Guide to Life**

Please don't ask how this follows on from clutter, because I don't know, but I would like to share with you the following simple thoughts from the internet - some are deeper than others (and none of them originate from me!):

- Some days you are the bug, some days you are the windscreen.
- A closed mouth gathers no foot.
- Never test the depth of water with both feet.
- There's two theories to arguing with a woman. Neither one works.

### **To make you smile**

I have two this month:

*In the recent gales a farmer and his wife were unlucky and one of their barns blew down in the wind. The wife remembered they were insured and rang the company. She said to the clerk "We insured our barn for £50,000 and it has been destroyed in the wind. Can you send a cheque and we will get a new one."*

*"I'm sorry madam", said the clerk, "but that's not how it works. We send out an assessor and he decides how much the barn was worth, and we provide you with a barn of similar value"*

*The wife thinks for a while and says "Can we cancel my husband's life insurance?"*

The following was submitted by a subscriber (no doubt exasperated by my poor sense of humour). Please note I have no intention to offend the Irish, but could not think of an alternative to insert in its place.

*A lorry driver breaks down on the motorway with a cargo of live monkeys on board, bound for Chester Zoo. They need to be delivered by 9:00 am and the driver fears he will get the sack if they don't get there on time. He decides to try and thumb a lift for his monkeys and eventually an Irish lorry driver pulls over.*

*"Where they going?" asks the Irish chap. "Do us a favour mate and take these to Chester Zoo for me" says the driver, "and here's a hundred quid for your troubles."*

*"Happy days," says the Irish fella, loads the monkeys onto his truck and gets on his way. The lorry driver goes about trying to fix his truck and is there for a good few hours when he notices the Irish fella coming back down the motorway, still with all the chimps on board. Panicking, he flags him down again. "What are you playing at," he fumes, "I told you to take them to Chester Zoo!"*

*"I did," says the bemused Irish fella, "but there's still fifty quid left so now we're going to Alton Towers."*

Thank you again for reading my missives, and for the comments I receive back. If you have any ideas for topics to cover, please let me know. And Happy Thanksgiving!

James Butler

+44 (0)1491 659073

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If you would like to receive a copy of the first issue of this newsletter, which explained what coaching is and introduced the idea of clearing Tolerations, please click [here](#), then press send in your e-mail package.

If you would like to receive a copy of the second issue of this newsletter, which presented a 7 step plan to improving your finances, please click [here](#), then press send in your e-mail package.