



Your life,

GUILTY? SAD? STUCK IN A RUT? WHATEVER YOUR ISSUE, BESPOKE LIFE

There was a time, not so very long ago, when life coaching had a one-cure-fits-all approach. Whether you were going through a marriage meltdown or a quarter-life crisis, the kind of help on offer was generic at best, irrelevant at worst. But lately, we've noticed more and more specialist trouble-shooters offering specific, bespoke advice that fills in the gaps left by your life experience. This kind of tailored approach makes much more sense – like seeing a chiropodist about bunions, rather than a GP. To find out how targeted coaching works, we asked four readers to bare their souls.

'I love kids – but do I really want my own?'

THE TESTER: Nicola Lespeare, a 31-year-old administrator, from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

'I'm driving myself crazy with the baby question,' says Nicola. 'It's the last thing I think about at night and the first thing I think about each morning. On one hand, I've been in a committed relationship for two years with Mark, who's 41, and I'm at a prime age for motherhood. On the other hand, I don't feel responsible enough, worry about the trauma to my body, and am not remotely broody. Most



of my friends already have babies, and when I mention my quandary to them, they make me feel guilty. They seem to take my indecision personally, as if I'm questioning their choice to become a mother. But, for me, being a mum isn't the be-all and end-all. While I love kids, especially my sister's twin boys, I'm happy to hand them back at the end of the day. The way I feel

changes from day to day, and having to explain myself makes things worse.'

THE COACH: Maybe Baby Coaching with Beth Follini

A Maybe Baby coach talks women

HAPPIER

COACHING COULD HELP. WE SENT FOUR READERS FOR TAILOR-MADE ADVICE

WORDS RUTH TIERNEY

through the baby decision, looking at the impact a child will have on every area of your life, from career to relationships. Exercises help to identify your fears and shift your perspective. It can help if you're unsure whether to have a baby; if you have no biological urge but feel you should; if you want a baby but your partner doesn't (and vice versa); or if you're a single woman considering going it alone.

WHAT HAPPENED: 'I was nervous before talking to Beth, but she has such a calming voice, I immediately felt at ease,' says Nicola. 'During our session [two rolled into one], Beth took me on a visual journey to meet myself in 20 years' time. I had to imagine floating out of my body, before entering my future house and sitting on the sofa with a fiftysomething me. I was a little plumper, but had an air of fulfilment. Beth said I could ask

myself one question and, inevitably, I enquired whether I should have a baby. "You won't have children but it's okay, you make the right choice," sprang into my head. It was bizarre. Beth said my inner self had answered my dilemma. I was surprised by how moving and powerful the whole experience was.

She then asked what was behind my decision, and I told her that it was down to being brought up in a single-parent family. It was a struggle for my own mother, and I never want a dependent relying on me. I also told Beth that the reactions of friends cloud my judgment. She explained that, for many people, having children is such a powerful urge that they can't comprehend that others may not feel the same. She said that the doubts I have about my true feelings are the result

of my negative inner voice. I was asked to describe what it looks like and I decided upon a pile of rubbish. Beth suggested that I visually "sweep away" that rubbish every time I start beating myself up about my decision.'

THE VERDICT: 'It's been two weeks since I spoke to Beth, and I haven't thought about the baby issue once – before the session, I was fretting about it 24/7. Finally, I feel relaxed in the knowledge that I don't want a baby. I actually had the answer to my big question myself, but the sense of peace that talking to an impartial outsider gave me was huge. Mark is happy with the outcome, too, and has said he'll support my decision.'

TO BOOK: ticktockcoaching.co.uk. A one-hour telephone coaching session costs £75 (or £55 if you earn less than £35,000).