



Yes! You Can Make Money as a Life Coach

Guest: Heidi Benjaminsen

Shelley Hunter: You're listening to the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. I'm your host, Shelley Hunter. This is a place where we talk to people who recognize the Lord's hand in their lives, and specifically in their careers.

Thank you for joining me on episode 19 of the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. Today I'm talking to Heidi Benjaminsen on being a life coach. If you're just tuning in or listening to this podcast for the first time, I'm on a quest to interview people in all sorts of careers, specifically those who feel they've found their calling in life and have seen the hand of God guiding them towards it.

For everyone I've talked to so far, discovering that thing you feel you were born to do rarely comes early in life. Not necessarily late either, but only after a period of preparation. Sometimes the preparation feels random and takes longer than you'd like. Once you figure out that career and calling, you can look back and see the beauty and necessity of the process. Talking to Heidi, she's yet another wonderful example of a woman who had a career that she put on pause to be home with her kids, willingly and happy to do so.

When she felt the prompting to start a business, it was both a total departure from her previous career while also leveraging the skills she had mastered in that position.

This is what I call the stay-at-home mom pivot and discovering it is turning into my favorite part of this business.

Now, I didn't know that when I asked Heidi to come on the show. This is what I wanted to ask her, "Can you make money as a life coach?" Here's why.

Three plus years ago, I got introduced to the Jody Moore podcast formerly *Bold New Mom* and now called *Better Than Happy*. I love it.

Jody Moore is a highly successful life coach, along with her mentor Brooke Castillo. Now I'm not sure I even knew what a life coach was prior to listening to these podcasts. It's really popular, so much so that I know at least four women right now who are currently training to be life coaches. I wanted to talk to somebody who's not as successful as Jody Moore because that might be unicorn status and not someone just starting out because I want this podcast to be inspirational, but actionable, something you can listen to and start taking steps to achieve yourself today.

Well, it didn't take me long to find Heidi Benjaminsen. She's a certified life coach who helps women lose weight and gain confidence. As a mother of three teenagers and having lost over 70 pounds herself more than a decade ago, she now helps women uncover the confidence that has always been within them. She hosts a weekly podcast called *Hi, This is Heidi*, and has a free Facebook group called lose weight and gain confidence along with her website, heidibenjaminsen.com. That's B-E-N-J-A-M-I-S-E-N.com. Heidi has been a life coach for a little over two years, and she is most definitely making money. Let's find out more.

Heidi Benjaminsen: What I've been doing the last two and a half years, it really is several big puzzle pieces that are different seasons in my life have now all really come together to have me doing what I am doing right now.

When I went to college, I had this perception that somehow you become an adult, you figure out what you want to do and you do that for the rest of your life, and that everyone just knows that. If you're going to be an accountant, you just knew that.

I think I was really surprised when I got to college and I was like, "Oh wait, I don't know necessarily what I want to do." I remember my first couple of years I majored in math, just because that's what I was good at. At the end of my second year, I was like, "Just because I'm good at something doesn't mean I'm really enjoying it." I changed my major to sociology at that time. People were telling me, "Well, that's not really a major where you can make a lot of money afterward."

I remember at that time being like, "Well, I want to do what feels right to me." Sociology was a place where I loved learning about our emotions. I loved learning about the brain. I loved learning about just social constructs and how people worked together. I didn't quite know what I was going to do, but I knew that that's just more what felt right inside of me and where I could feel just different sparks of my gifts coming up.

Shelley: I love that you were intuitive enough to figure it out right then. Okay, so next.

Heidi: I graduated in sociology. I served a mission for our church. Then I moved up to Boston. Moving up to Boston was just this really big prompting I got after my mission that that's where I needed to take the next step of my life. I had never even been to Boston. I had one friend that lived up here. I moved up and everything really worked out incredibly well. In my first job in all of the buildings in Boston, I was working one floor away from the woman that would be my future sister in law and I would marry her brother two years after moving to Boston.

I had been working with a woman who was an executive. She ended up starting her own consulting company. She hired me as her first employee. She really taught me everything about her business. Again, it was like the math situation. I was really good at everything I was doing for her, but it wasn't like, "Oh, I want to be doing this for the rest of my life."

For five years, I worked for her and I got to see her business grow. I was very much a part of finding new clients. I was thrown into new situations all the time. It was just an amazing experience for me to see how a business grows and for me to grow my confidence.

Here, I was thinking like, "Oh, my gosh, I can't believe I'm giving this presentation to this CEO." There were times I traveled all over. For over a year, I'd be at a company implementing a big software system. It was a real-time where I can see the Lord was really working on teaching me a lot about confidence, teaching me a lot about building a business. It was an incredible experience. At that time, I still had these seeds inside of me. I would like to be a mother. It did take us a couple of years to get pregnant. I had my oldest son when I was 31 years old. At that time, I was really ready to go into the phase of being a full-time mom.

Now something that was happening in parallel, I was really struggling with my weight and my health. A lot of that was coming from emotional eating, not really understanding a lot about nutrition, and then also not understanding a lot about my emotions and that when you're feeling something really bad, you don't need to eat. One of the wonderful blessings of just making the transition for myself, leaving behind the identity of the business world and what I had been doing, and taking on this new identity as a mother is that I really was able to then get inside some of my head and to really look at, "Well, how do I even identify as a person? What am I thinking? Where can I make some other changes?"

I started making other changes too right after he was born. I did things like join Weight Watchers, which was really good to start learning about nutrition and having a lot of awareness. I very much took on the identity, I'm going to change this about myself. The bigger changes that I started making, even though I was doing other things, I was eating different, I started making changes inside my head. I changed my identity of just what I thought about myself.

I really would think "Okay, well, I really want to think like an athlete. I want to be this type of person. What choice does that type of person make? If they're going into the airport, what kind of foods do they buy?" The changes were going on inside of my head, but other things were changing that were visible to other people. It wasn't coming from a place of, "I need to be skinny, or I need to be this size." None of it was coming from, "I need to do this so that I'm a better person or so that someone else likes me or so I feel validated."

That was the real change that it wasn't like, "Oh, when I see this number on the scale then I'll be happier or something like that."

Throughout the time, people would always ask me, "What did you do to lose this weight?" I would tell them what I thought they wanted to hear. "I'm going to the gym and I'm doing Weight Watchers." I would tell them whatever I thought they wanted to hear. All along, I would be thinking, "You're asking the wrong question."

The real question is, "What are you thinking?" Because I knew all along even though I had done certain things, I knew the real change was me thinking something different, and me just becoming a different person in my mind.

Shelley: I love the puzzle pieces. I love how they're all building on each other. When did this turn into a business for you?

Heidi: My main focus for a long time was my children. I was very involved in their lives and very involved in volunteer things. Then what happened as they started approaching the teenage years, I started looking around and like, "Well, they're going to be all gone in eight years. What do I want?" I started to see even in me, "Well, if I'm going to judge my sense of me being a mother over their choices," I didn't like how that felt inside me. "Oh, my value and if I've done this, right is if they go to this college or make this choice or that choice."

I really noticed, "Okay, that's interesting. If I'm going to have something that's my own thing, what is that going to be?" One of the best things I did was for a couple of years, just watching other people. I knew I want a lot of flexibility. I knew from the beginning if I'm going to do something, I do not want to work for someone else. Then sometimes I'd have this thought in my head, "Well, maybe you don't need to do something. You've loved being a mother."

I have to tell you, Shelley, I just always had this recurring thought coming into my head, you can do more. That's what it would say. That would be the thought. If would think about, "No, I enjoy just going to lunch with my friends and all that." There was no hustle or rush behind it. It was just this underlying, you can do more. Then it would really help me tap into what are my gifts? Where do I shine? How can I use who I am supposed to be, and who I am, how can I help other people?

About two and a half years ago, I was introduced to two podcasts, Jody Moore's podcast, Better than Happy. Another podcast, The Life Coach School with Brooke Castillo. At that time, I'm being asked these questions, "No, what did you do?" Again, in my mind, I'm thinking, "You're asking the wrong question." It's, "What have I been thinking?" All of a sudden I now have the answer that has been my secret, that I just haven't known how to explain to people.

I now have the answer that it's not just what I've done, but I have this coaching model and this tool that I can help people, not just change their weight but anything that they want to change to help them see your thoughts are what are really creating, how you're feeling and which are then going to fuel your actions if you want to lose weight or not lose weight. I pretty quickly decided this is what I'm going to do. I think it's because I had been so patient over those earlier years of knowing I'm only going to say yes to something if it ticks off all of the boxes.

Shelley: We talked a little bit before the interview, so I'll just give the spoiler alert here. You went all in once you figured out that this is what you wanted to do?

Heidi: I went all-in from the beginning.

Shelley: Tell me about that.

Heidi: I signed up for coach training. Mine was all online, six months of online. It didn't start right away after I signed up. I have to tell you, I decided I was starting my business right away. To be a life coach, you don't need to be certified. In fact, most of my clients don't care if I even am certified, our clients care that we can help them. When people ask me, "Why did you go there?" I'm like, "I wouldn't have gone anywhere else." They have the tool that I want to be really certified in, that I want to be an expert in because I know that it works. I did it on my own for 15 years so I signed up for it.

It didn't start right away, but I really started my business. I signed up for an LLC. I signed up for an email system. It wasn't coming just for me. I got my own domain. Then just started telling people that I was a life coach and I can help you. About the time that I started certification, I had paying clients.

Shelley: Let's take this to the moment between, I'm the friend who helps everybody who asks me versus I am a professional now, and if you want my help, you'll have to pay for it. How did you make that transition?

Heidi: Luckily, I in my mind had really been thinking that through. I knew this is how much, I'm going to charge \$1,200 for 12 sessions, I had made that decision. Also, in my mind, again, I really knew that I had to have the belief inside my head. I really wanted to think and act like a coach making over 100,000. In my mind, I'd visualized how does a coach who's already made 100,000, how does she present herself? How does she say that? Where does that come from inside of her? Of course, it comes from this belief, of course, I can help you, this is what I do. I knew it's not going to come from me saying, "Well, I'm just starting this business."

Even though I had done that with other people, maybe people that knew me, I had very much tried to visualize that. That's where my own coaching came in, making sure that's where I was. My first couple of clients, it was talking to someone at a doctor's office and a nurse saying, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a life coach." We had already been talking for a few minutes and she was like, "I need someone to help me. What do you charge?" Since I had already made those decisions, "This is what I charged. This is what it is." I've since more than doubled my rates. At the beginning, I knew that, and she was like, "That's great. Let's start Friday."

Shelley: That one was amazing. Then did you have some that said, "Oh?"

Heidi: I did, and I still do. Because that's part of my own coaching that I have to have the belief. Other people might not believe that coaching is worth it to them. They might not believe that they can invest in themselves. They might not believe that I can help them, but that's okay. I have to have the belief that I can help people get to

this transformation. There are people that just say, "Oh, that's a lot of money." I say, "Yes, it is." For anyone starting out to realize I did have to do my own coaching and understanding my own belief on that. That is something that absolutely has to grow.

Especially as women, if we've grown up in either religious or family, or cultural, or social constructs where our value and our skills are something that are expected to be volunteered, or they're expected to be serviced, we have to shift that belief of, "Wait, I want to build a business on that. The help I can do for someone is worth them investing in." Women that are willing to invest the money in themselves, the transformation that they make is just amazing. It's just beautiful because it's come from a place where they realize, I am worth improving and I am worth investing in. It's been wonderful to see that.

Shelley: What kind of adjustments did your family make? You've been a stay-at-home mom it sounds like for 16 years, super involved in everything they're doing, did that continue or did you have to make some adjustments?

Heidi: Yes. Definitely I had to make some adjustments. About that time I was ending time on my kids, PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization). My kids have all been in a charter school starting in sixth grade. It was a natural time that I was stopping that. My oldest was starting to drive, so that was great. They really were able to do more around the house and take care of themselves. I have to say that has been a huge blessing for them. They're teenagers, they're totally capable of it. I feel like it's been a blessing for them to not have me hovering over them. They've needed that independence, it's been very good for them, for me to have other things that I'm focused on.

Shelley: I love the unexpected blessing. Heidi, before I ask you the final questions that I ask all of my guests, what other advice would you give to anybody who is thinking of becoming a life coach?

Heidi: I spend at least 50% of my time being the CEO of my company. I see that life coaches, if they're not prepared to build their website and to do their own marketing and to understand the nuts and bolts of their business, if they're not prepared then that's going to take a significant amount of your business time. Now, granted, I really don't work more than 20, 30 hours a week.

Over 50% of that is me doing things that are more on a CEO level versus coaching with clients and making content. Now, granted, as I grow, I'll be able to outsource more of that. It's really important as you're starting a business to take the time to learn all of those things. The other thing too is if they're not willing to invest, I've been able to make money since the beginning, but I've also spent more than I've made.

Shelley: What are you spending money on?

Heidi: First of all, was my certification was a more expensive certification, spending money on any marketing collateral, which costs \$15 a month for me to have my podcast hosted on a system. I think I pay \$10 a month to have some email system. I think \$120 a year for Canva pro. All of these things add up and you don't have to do

all of those things. That was a sign of me saying, "Coaching is worth investing in." When I go out and I tell someone else they need to pay me a certain amount of money, that's coming from a place of, I've also invested this. Even to this day, I have my own one-on-one coach. My belief is not just that someone else needs to pay me, but also that I pay a coach as well.

Shelley: One thing you did have though was the luxury of time?

Heidi: Yes.

Shelley: How long did it take you to get to the point you are now? How long has it been since that decision to where you are now?

Heidi: That has been probably two years and four months.

Shelley: When do you start earning a paycheck?

Heidi: It was in the first half of that year. That first year I probably made a little under \$13,000, but I spent more than that. Then the next year I doubled my income. Again, I spent more than I was bringing in. Now, this year is going to be very different. This is the third year, and I'm very much able to build on the foundation that I have built over the last two years. I have plans to be making more like 120,000 this year. This is the year things are going to really change. I'm glad that I knew I'm going to need to invest from the beginning and that I had the time to be able to do that.

Shelley: That's really remarkable and impressive. Actually, the question I have is, for people who are struggling financially or life circumstances have put them in a position where they need to make a living quickly, do you think six months getting up to speed is remarkable or typical?

Heidi: The money comes back to you generally because you've been able to put out a lot of value, either in doing a lot of presentations or a lot of free networking events, or a podcast. At the same time, telling as many people as possible, "I am a life coach, I can help you." Much of that has to come before because people have to have built a sense of trust in you. They have to realize, "Oh, I want what she can help me get, or I'm willing to pay for what she can help me get."

Shelley: Yes. I love that. It really brings us back to my original question of what you do when somebody can't afford for your services. Well, what they can do is go to your website. They can listen to your podcasts, they can get all sorts of free help. Heidi, as we wrap this up, can you tell me about a leap of faith you had to take?

Heidi: I think one of the biggest leaps of faith ever in my life was really when I moved up to Boston and I didn't know how anything was going to work out. I had no answers. I was living with a friend on her couch and I think that I've had this underlying sense of like, "Oh, you can do it." I need to then follow the promptings. Even if things don't make sense, if I'm always following something that I've been given as a prompting, I don't need to know how it's going to work out. I just need to take the steps and it will work out.

Shelley: Heidi, what is an unexpected blessing? Something you couldn't see for yourself in becoming a life coach.

Heidi: I think there've been some really cool rewards for my children that again, I didn't anticipate. About nine months after I started my business, I had launched my podcast, and my second son at the time was 15 and a half. We were out driving in the car and he had even told me earlier that week that one of his friends had listened to my podcast because I think I'm friends with his mom and they had been playing it. All of a sudden my kids are like, "My mom has a podcast. How cool!"

We were driving in the car. It was just me and Matthew. He turned to me and he said, "Mom, I'm really proud of you. You said you were going to do something hard and you did it."

I had this just moment of reflection. Of course, I was so happy because we do want to be able to be good influences in our children's lives. I realized I've done a lot of hard things in my life but they haven't seen them. They're now able to watch me walk the talk. They're able now to see me doing things that I'm teaching them to do but now they can be like, Oh yes, mom says I can do it. Well, she started the podcast and now she's doing this. She's giving these presentations, she's doing all of this."

That just has always been this unexpected thing of the example that I would be able to be for them. I think another unexpected thing, there's been one life coach that I've met-- I've met many through my coaching, but one specializes in teen anxiety and she now does private coaching to two of my children. I didn't realize there would be some anxiety issues. Because of the blessing of my job, I'm able to provide for a coach to then help my children with these tools. I had no idea. I didn't anticipate that.

Shelley: Heidi, last question. How have you seen the hand of God in your career?

Heidi: Oh my goodness. I have seen it everywhere. I saw it with me just having the faith to make that change in my degree in college and to just lean into my own confidence of what I wanted for sure, taking that job to work for this small management consulting company, I can look back and I can remember this one night I was praying about, should I take this job? Because there were a lot of reasons why I shouldn't take that job. I just remember waking up in the middle of the night and I had that sense, "Take the job. It's all going to work out."

I didn't know where that came from. It wasn't coming from like common sense and to see how that has blessed my life and still continues to bless it. Just in so many ways in my husband's, his incredible support of like what I'm doing. Also, there have been clients I have worked with over the last two and a half years that it has been pure inspiration us working together at this exact time for me to have the exact tools, they need to help them through some pretty difficult things in their lives. I feel very honored. I feel very humbled that my gifts are able to help them. I see it all over.

Shelley: Thank you so much for being on the show.

Heidi: Yes. You're welcome. Thank you.

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Shelley: I'm especially grateful for Heidi coming on this show today. Not only am I inspired by her diligence and the way she tackled this business but something she said hit me at exactly the moment I needed to hear it. You see, I've been contemplating getting certified as a career coach. As I listened to Heidi, tell her story. I thought, "This is me." I've helped so many people get jobs, start businesses, fix up their resumes, and so forth. I didn't really think I needed a piece of paper to say that I could do it when so many people I've worked with are already speaking on my behalf.

When she mentioned the transformation she sees, when women invest in themselves, it just hit me in a way that I knew I needed to hear it. I thought, "I'm not sure I've done that in a long time. What gifts have I given myself lately?" The program I wanted to apply for it's costly. That was holding me back. Yes, I've paid \$38 to learn social media or \$25 for a tennis lesson, which I really love doing but getting better trained in something I feel called to do is a leap of faith that I need to take.

I promise you in the middle of editing this podcast, I switched over to another window and signed up to be a Gallup certified strengths coach starting in May.

That leaves me wondering, "What's been gnawing at you? What are people always asking you for help with? What are you doing already to help people? Is it weight loss? Is it career advice or business advice, social media, parenting, party planning, or catering? What is it?" I bet you know. Now, timing may be a different issue and certainly cost factors in too, but my challenge for you today is this just think about it and maybe explore it a little and pray about it and think about it and ponder on it. If the time is right for you to invest in yourself, then why not do it, you're worth it. Like Heidi says, the transformation will be amazing.

Thank you again, Heidi, for being on this show, for really being so candid about your business, and prompting me to do something that I need to do as well.

Thank you for listening to the Faithful Career Moves podcast, a place where we talk to people who have seen the hand of God in their lives and specifically in their careers. If you want to learn more or you know someone you think I should interview connect with me on social media @faithfulcareermoves or on my website at faithfulcareermoves.com.