

Ticket to Hollywood: WBO Member Wins Big at Power Conference and presents at a Master's Mastermind by Marcela Kogan

Kay Loughrey is pitching her Sweet Life Wellness business in Hollywood to a group of 3 leaders, who are running a mastermind workshop for entrepreneurs.

"Weight problems often stem from childhood trauma," says the health and wellness coach as she paces around the room, making eye-to-eye contact with participants.

A nutritionist, dietitian and lifestyle coach, Kay—also a WBO member--has given speeches promoting health and nutrition throughout her 30 year career in government and the private sector.

But this speech is different. This time, she is speaking out.

"I was sexually abused when I was 8," she reveals, then pauses, takes a deep breath. "And it made me feel ashamed, worthless, afraid and unprotected. Then I began eating to comfort myself. Food was my escape."

This escape gave way to decades of yo-yo dieting and weight fluctuations that amounted to more than 300 pounds.

"One day," she raises her voice, "I looked fear in the eye and I said enough!"

Then she started therapy. She realized she did not cause the abuse and that she deserved happiness. "What I discovered," she says, "was how to turn trauma into growth and free myself from weight issues and love myself again."

Now, she wants to help others do the same.

Ken Kragen, mastermind of "Hands Across America" and one of the workshop instructors, cheers and urges her go national with her story. Kay is elated over her possibilities, her head is spinning as she makes out words like, star quality, speaking tour, television interviews.

Could this be really happening to her?

In a telephone interview 2 months after the workshop, she recalls the experience as surreal. Almost a fluke. She enrolled in the workshop while attending a conference, jostling her way through the crowd to grab hold of the sign-up sheet. Then, while attending the Power Conference in August, she won a roundtrip on American airlines.

"I didn't expect manna to fall from heaven," she said.

Kay's interest in wellness stems back to the 1970s, when she lived in a commune in Oregon and later attended San Francisco State University and University of Hawaii to study nutrition. Several years later, she took a job with the federal government and over the next several decades worked on many health initiatives, including directing the National Cancer Institute's 5-a-Day media campaign educating millions of Americans about nutrition.

To outsiders, she was at the top of her game, making a six-figure salary. But inside, she felt suffocated by red tape and bureaucracy. She wanted to work one-on-one with clients whose weight struggles interfered with healthy relationships and successful businesses.

In 2011, she left her full-time job and, a year later, opened up an office in Gaithersburg.

Over the years, she noticed that many of her clients had experienced trauma including sexual abuse as children. They scraped by in life but they were scarred, making it hard for them to succeed personally and professionally.

“Emotional baggage holds people back in their business,” she said. “When you don’t feel good about yourself and you are at a sales meeting, your confidence is shot and baggage from your past is undermining your confidence and enabling the critic to come full throttle, sending messages like, ‘what’s wrong with you? You’ve always been incompetent.’”

Sweet Life Wellness’ approach consists of a comprehensive lifestyle change program designed to increase energy by developing healthy eating patterns, becoming more physically active—and looking inward at the root causes of weight struggles.

Kay is keyed up to take her company to the next level. She plans to spread her message nationally and is working with a speaker coach to boost her stage presence. “I’m going to be playing a much bigger game than I was,” she said.

She plans to live her life more fully. She looks forward to dining with her retired husband in Italy, and sipping wine with him in France. Her life is sweet indeed!