

Testimonial for Culinary Coaching
Katie Van Dorn, Certified Wellness Coach and Chef

Dear Dr. Rani Polak

I want to thank you for introducing the certification process for working as a Culinary Coach. With the abundance of easily accessed processed foods in our modern day world, and most people opting to eat out over cooking their own food, this culinary coaching concept is the perfect prescription for being able to help be coached on all the elements involved with preparing one's daily meals. As a lifelong participant in thriving through healthy living, combined with an innate passion for cooking, I think that Dr. Rani Polak and Harvard's Institute of Lifestyle Medicine exhibited brilliance when they initiated the concept of offering a culinary coaching for health care and other professionals. The lessons learned in this program provide valuable skills that everyone should have in their healthy living plan.

My career has taken me through many changes in the health and wellness industry since I started in the 1980's. In those earlier days, the platform for delivering health promotion and wellness included offering health risk appraisals, where the client reported time spent on daily exercise, vegetable and fruit servings intake, amount of cigarettes smoked, level of stress, etc. In conjunction, health screenings were offered to measure blood pressure, resting heart rate, total, HDL, LDL and VLDL cholesterol, body weight, body mass index, and percent body fat. The results provided the client with an overall assessment of their health, based upon behavioral lifestyle habits. This served to provide awareness for them, and though it was usually followed up with education and knowledge of why to change one's lifestyle, the "how to" was not effectively addressed.

Wellness Coaching has helped to bridge the gap by providing individualized care for clients. Coaching helps the client to acquire and master life skills through the process of developing a blueprint for wellbeing, and through one on one sessions, helps them become more confident in their ability to implement those habits. Yet, one of the most critical elements of our daily life - what we eat, how we shop for it, and how we prepare our food - has not been addressed. And unless one is a trained chef, or has a strong propensity towards cooking, utilizing healthy ingredients, one does not know where to begin in this area of healthy lifestyle management. I am, therefore, ever so grateful to Dr. Rani Polak and the Harvard Institute of Lifestyle Medicine for developing this excellent Culinary Coaching Program.

The larger group sessions with both Dr. Edward Phillips and Dr. Rani Polak, combined with the smaller group sessions, were excellent. It was wonderful to learn about the overall healthy cooking concepts in the larger group sessions, and then actually get the opportunity to practice and apply what one has learned in the small group sessions.

I also applaud the schedule for this course. It was long enough to learn how to effectively work as a Culinary Coach, yet it was not too long to become burdensome. I like the way the course was offered with alternating weeks, with large group sessions one week, followed by the smaller sessions the next week.

The content of the program was very comprehensive and the research literature shared to back up the methodology was well documented. The format of applying the coaching techniques similar to the method used by WellCoaches Inc. was also incorporated nicely. I look forward to integrating these Culinary Coaching techniques into my Wellness Coaching work, as well as in my efforts to provide cooking courses to patients and members of the public.

Thanks very much Rani. You are an excellent instructor!

