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Virgin Pulse



VIRGIN PULSE

*Connect Your People to Better Health
With Live Coaching Services*

with

NELLIE BRAU & PEGGY STEWART

ABOUT **NELLIE BRAU**



Nellie Brau is a lifestyle coach at Virgin Pulse. She holds a masters in holistic health, is a certified health and wellness coach, yoga teacher and an Ayurvedic specialist. She has dedicated her career to learning new ways to support people in their health journeys and works to help people feel their best.

ABOUT **PEGGY STEWART**



Peggy Stewart specializes in condition management. Peggy got her start as a nurse practitioner and focused on endocrinology and cardiology. After 17 years of working in family practice she decided to become the change she wanted to see in the healthcare industry and returned to school for integrative health and healing before joining Virgin Pulse as a health coach.

Healthy, happy and productive employees are at the heart of every thriving business.

But companies face tough challenges when it comes to creating healthy workforces. Chronic diseases can cost millions every year in insurance claims, absenteeism and reduced productivity. And the problems that affect your bottom line are often the most common—and preventable—health conditions, like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. How can you help your people make the best, most cost-effective decisions about their health—whether they're healthy or struggling with a chronic condition? How do you support them throughout their full health and wellbeing journey—from prevention to intervention to reversal? How do you keep them off the healthcare merry-go-round by leading healthy lifestyles?

Traditional, one-size-fits-all wellbeing approaches have failed to solve these challenges. These models frequently lack a human connection, which is often the spark that's needed to inspire healthy changes and drive life-changing results. Live coaches create high-impact touch-points that help individuals get started on the path to better health and keep them on that path as they take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Combined with engaging and easy-to-use digital experiences that support healthy daily routines, live coaches help change lives—and businesses—or good.

To uncover how live coaching works and explore how Virgin Pulse's unique person-first approach to coaching delivers greater engagement and better results, we've interviewed two expert coaches. With years of experience and varied backgrounds, they're helping individuals lead healthier, happier and more productive lives—at work and at home—every day.

★ Tell me about what health coaches do and how you work with people?

NELLIE BRAU Employers have offered wellness programs that have historically tackled two main things: physical activity and nutrition. The logic behind that is if you exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet then you will lose weight, improve heart health, protect against back injuries, and avoid developing health issues that can be prevented by lifestyle behavioral changes.

As a lifestyle health coach, the ultimate goal is to help people feel their best.

We meet regularly with individuals over the phone and discuss many different areas of their lives. We talk about personal, health or work challenges that they might be facing or anything that they'd like to work on. Then, we develop ways to go from wherever they're at to a state of thriving.



PEGGY STEWART As a health coach who specializes in condition management, I help people with the things they do every day to manage their healthcare needs. I empower people on their journey to improved health and wellness, however they define it.

★ How does helping people with their lifestyle positively impact their overall health?

N B Lifestyle goes far beyond “I get up, I grab my coffee, I go to work, I come home,” things like that. It’s, “Do you have time in your day that’s set aside for you? Do you take deep breaths throughout the day? Do you have some opportunity for movement? Do you connect with individuals in your life who are meaningful to you, whether that’s a partner, your children or your friends?” It’s about establishing day-to-day routines that enhance wellbeing and help to create a mindset that allows people to navigate change with ease.

Often in our lives, something happens and we get disrupted and it can be difficult to get back on track. That’s why I help people build resiliency and learn how to be flexible by establishing a solid foundation of healthy daily routines.

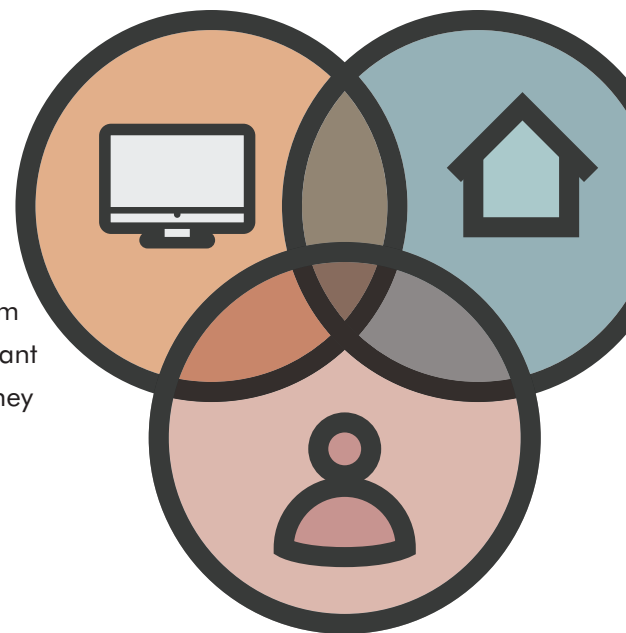
★ How do you bring a holistic approach to your coaching?

N B There are many, many ways in which the different areas of our health are connected. Usually, they work in reverse, too. If you’re not eating well, you might get stressed out, have trouble sleeping and start to feel the physical effects of everything combined, for example.

That’s why we take what we call the “whole person approach,” which means people are viewed first as human beings.

No matter where they are in their health journey, we’re going to meet them where they’re at. Then we work with people to determine the most important thing to work on first so that the other areas of their life can benefit and they can start to feel better.

P S There is no “one size fits all” approach to condition management so we always look at the broader picture. We ask about a person’s physical



surrounds, their work-life balance, whether they're spiritually fulfilled and anything else that could give us another avenue to help them manage their health.

Not only that, many people are managing multiple chronic conditions that are often interrelated. That's why it's so important to treat the individual as a whole, rather than a set of symptoms.

★ How does health coaching fit into the broader picture of individual healthcare?

N B I think that health coaches are the best possible complement to the healthcare system on the market today. The current healthcare system in America has its limitations, and we help to address that gap in care.

It's well-documented that healthcare professionals have less time to spend with patients, and in some cases, cost can be an issue. This means that really valuable conversations might not be had in doctor's offices as frequently.

Coaches provide that human conversation, where someone can show up as themselves, ask questions and be curious.

Then, we support them and ask questions like, "If this is what you're experiencing, how would this look in your actual lifestyle? How can we arrange things in a way that allows you to follow your doctor's treatment plan?"

Not only that, some people are scared or intimidated by the healthcare system and shy away from asking their doctor questions. Health coaches are able to validate those feelings, normalize them and then get people talking. Poor communication can be a barrier to following prescribed treatment plans, achieving good health and wellbeing and managing diseases. If we can get someone talking about their health, they're much more likely to succeed.

P S Because we connect with individuals at least every month, we have the opportunity to get to know them and learn what motivates them. We help them develop goals that go beyond their condition. Someone might come to us saying, "I want to manage my diabetes." But really that individual wants to manage their diabetes so they can spend more quality time with their loved ones, for example.

Through coaching we help people realize their intentions, then use that within our coaching framework to support them, help connect them with their purpose and maintain the motivation they need to succeed.



★ **It seems like these conversations could help individuals with their patient advocacy, is that something you'd agree with?**

N B Absolutely. When someone feels empowered about their health, they're likely to feel confident in their ability to face difficult situations and take better care of themselves as well. It translates to not just their doctor's visit but showing up for themselves and prioritizing their health every day.

P S I have also seen individuals I coach not only make those important doctor's appointments but show up better prepared and take a more active role in their health. I often help people draft questions to ask during their appointment and develop the confidence to talk about those things.

★ **Do individuals who use Virgin Pulse's health coaching speak with the same coach every time?**

N B Yes, everyone has access to a dedicated health coach, although they are free to hop around until they find someone who's the right fit.

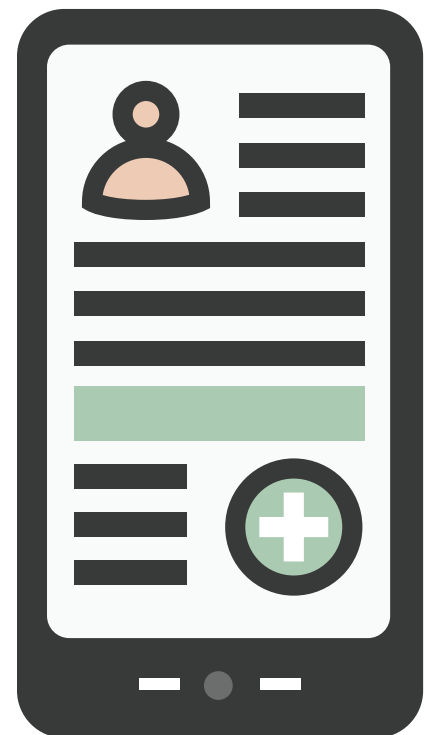
I also work closely with my fellow coaches to make sure each individual receives the best possible care. We have people who specialize in prenatal care, diabetes management, as well as pharmacists, dietitians, nutritionists and so many other areas of expertise. For example, if an individual has questions about their medication and its side effects, I'm able to connect them with a coach who is able to best advise them.

★ **How do you use the Virgin Pulse app to augment your coaching services?**

N B The resources in the app really help to support people in between our conversations. If I'm talking to someone about improving their diet, for example, and they're trying to eat more vegetables, I can match them with benefits, resources and programs that are tailored specifically to that.

P S Often the resources that I direct people to in the app act as a jumping off point for our next conversation. It helps them stay engaged in between our sessions and continue the great work they've started.

It also gives people the freedom to explore different programs and solutions on their own and encourages them to keep leading the conversation.



★ Do you have any advice for people who might need a little encouragement to make that first coaching appointment?

N B While people tend to find coaches a little more approachable than doctors, you still have some people who are afraid that their health coach is going to be that person with a whistle and a clipboard who will be upset with them if they didn't accomplish their goal.

In reality, it isn't about judgment. It's about being real and feeling better. We use honest conversations to decide, "What is it that you need right now? How do we work together to make that happen?" It's a more human process than I think people expect.

Another challenge is that many individuals assume they don't need a health coach because they "know how to be healthy." In some cases, this is true, however, most of us do not always do what we know. Knowledge does not equate behavior. Sure, most of the people I speak with understand that regular exercise enhances their health, for instance, yet, most have trouble sticking with an exercise routine.

This is the perfect scenario for a coach.

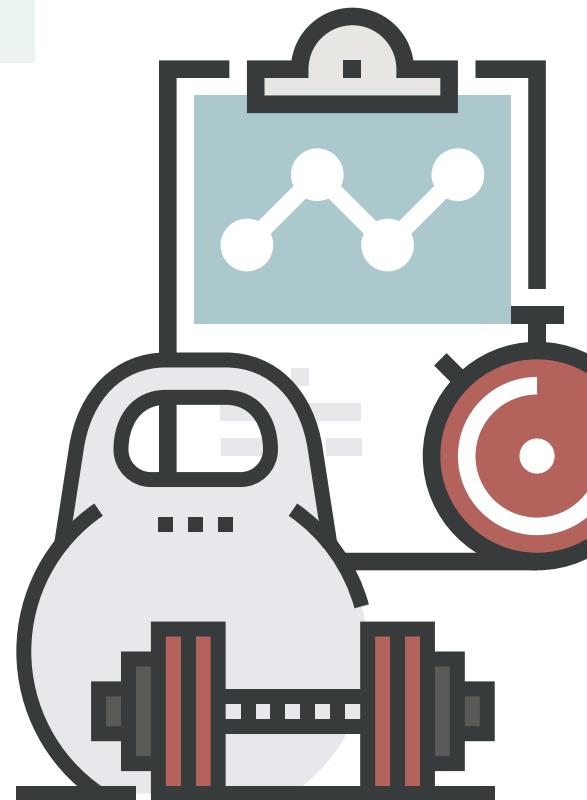
Coaches focus more on behavior change, habit development and creating routines than education.

This is helpful for the person who has health knowledge and awareness but lacks the ability to put their goals into practice. In my experience, this is the vast majority of individuals so everyone could benefit from coaching.

P S To add onto that, I would tell people that a coach is never going to tell you what to do right out of the gate. We let the individual lead the conversation, ask them about what they want and then offer ways to support them in their journey. We are there as an expert who will listen first and walk alongside you as you pursue your goals.

★ For somebody who just started working with a coach, is there any advice you would give them to get the most out of that experience?

N B For some, it's great to share their experience with friends and family to get that social support. For others, it might be something more internal or private like journaling about their goal.



To help people throughout their journey we send out a coaching guidebook at the end of the first session. It's a place where they can write notes about their experience throughout the month, write their goals down, journal about challenges or whatever comes to mind so they have that on hand for our next conversation. Finding a way to engage with the process outside of the coaching sessions every month definitely helps drive success.

★ Why is it important for employers to offer coaching services to their employees?

N B Employees who have access to coaching services have the opportunity to be more energetic, empowered, productive, innovative, creative and engaged. All of these things are, of course, so beneficial to the organization. Because when employees have that opportunity to engage in their own lives in a deeper way it affects their attitude and performance at work.

By investing in an individual's attitude, performance, and overall happiness, a company is demonstrating that they care about the long term. Rarely, if ever, have I heard of an employee who's been really happy and engaged at work and then has decided to leave that employer. Happy, healthy people tend to stay engaged with what they are doing and evolve, rather than looking for something else.

P S Coaching services help people be not just mentally present at work, but physically present by needing fewer sick days and time off for appointments.

By putting health first, people are able to do their best in every aspect of their lives, and especially at work.

Not only that, coaching really works, particularly when combined with a digital platform to support healthy daily routines. Individuals who participated in live health coaching and had access to a digital platform achieved 28% better weight loss outcomes, 10% better blood pressure outcomes and 82% better tobacco cessation outcomes than those who did not.

★ In your opinion, what should employers look for when researching a coaching program?

N B I think it's important to look for a program that offers choice and flexibility. Look for programs that take an individualized approach that gives participants the choice to start wherever they are ready to begin, integrating



both lifestyle and condition management coaching. We find this approach delivers a better experience for the participant and better results for both them and their employer. Also look at how diverse their coaches are in backgrounds and in personality so that individuals are sure to find someone they can connect with to address their needs. Coaches should also be available on flexible schedules that fit easily into the lives of an organization's employees.

It's also important to look for happy coaches. We work all day long on compassion and emotion.

If the coaches are happy, you are going to see incredible benefits to those individuals who are working with them.

Ask questions like, "What kind of support do coaches receive so they are able to look after their own wellbeing?"

At Virgin Pulse, we're proud to support the millions of individuals and thousands of companies around the world who trust us to help them change their lives—and their businesses—for good. As the industry-leader, we deliver the only fully integrated live and digital solution to support global clients and individuals across the entire health, wellbeing and benefits lifecycle—from screening and assessment to activation, behavior change and the adoption of sustainable healthy habits. 📌



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