

To get something done, start by doing nothing

Austin life coach wrote the book on how to accomplish what matters to you

By **Melanie Spencer**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

10:30 a.m. Upper Crust Bakery in Hyde Park. Not coffee, but lemonade.

"The lemonade is really good here," says Ann Daly as we wait for the cashier to hand us our cups.

Our meeting takes place the week before the launch of Daly's third book, "Clarity: How to Accomplish What Matters Most" (\$15.95, Wollemi Pine Press). Daly, a former performance studies professor at the University of Texas who is now a life coach, author, speaker and confessed self-help book junkie, returned from an annual weeks-long trip to Berkeley, Calif, the night before our coffee — er, lemonade — date.

We each fill our cups with ice and the sweet-

Q&A with the coach

What: Book release, including a Q&A hosted by Mary Anne Connolly, editor of Austin Woman magazine

When: 7 tonight

Where: BookWoman, 918 W. 12 St.

Cost: Free

Information: 472-2785, www.ebookwoman.com

What: BookWisdom for the Creative Woman

When: 7 p.m. Oct. 24

Where: BookWoman

Cost: Free

Information: www.anndaly.com

tart liquid and find a seat in the bustling bakery.

"How did you go from professor to life coach?" I ask.

"I taught at UT for 17 years, and it was time for a new challenge," Daly says. Her auburn hair (which Daly later tells me she is growing out) is short and sassy. It fits her exuberant

gestures and nearly constant smile. "I'd heard about coaching and it really appealed to me in the gut. I started to get invited to do workshops, and people started to want to work with me one-on-one. I was born and bred to sort things out. I have this itch to clear things up, and it's helping people."

Daly works almost exclusively with female clients; many are writers and visual and performance artists. Some are often on the cusp of a new project or transition or experiencing a creative block.

"Are your clients a mess by the time they come to you?" I ask. Daly laughs.

"They are never a mess; they are rare jewels," she says. "Some need a partner or witness to go through steps and some are trying to get through something deeper. Part of my notion of clarity is a process. The 'aha' moments are so few and far between that I don't like to depend on them. As a scholar, I researched and told stories of women and the arts. Part of what they are looking for

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Melanie Spencer AMERICAN-STATESMAN

Ann Daly

COFFEE: A few guilty pleasures won't hurt you; just make good choices to accomplish goals

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is to be more creative with their life.”

Another question. “In the book, you prescribe 15 minutes of nothing every day. How do you spend your 15 minutes?”

“My nothing is really in the morning, before or after my morning pages,” Daly says (morning pages are a journaling exercise from the cre-

ative bible “The Artist’s Way,” which is one of many works Daly references in her own book). “I go outside on the porch. I have a little bench and I look at the garden.”

Daly confesses to additional addictions (other than self-help books) — being lazy, gardening and listening to gardening shows on KLBJ-AM. And after all, admitting your addiction is the first step toward recovery.

The good news is Daly doesn’t advise getting rid of your not-so-unhealthy addictions and guilty pleasures (pew) or, as she calls them, resistance. She recommends identifying the resistance, making friends with it and using it to your advantage. For example, Daly says the urge she feels to listen to gardening shows is her mind nudging her to take a break.

“The myth is that you can have it all and don’t

have to make choices,” she says. “The clarity work is realizing there are only 24 hours in the day, seven days a week. If you aren’t accomplishing what matters most, you have to make choices and choices can be painful. Those choices are what really help us accomplish our dreams.”

Aha.

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