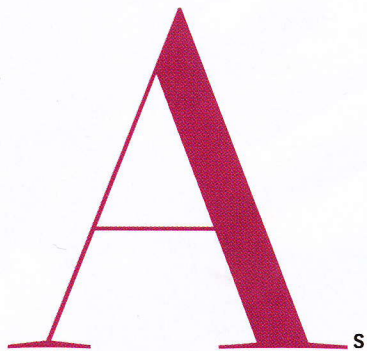


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Live **YOUR BEST** Life

From Fund-Raiser to Reiki Master

Burned out by an all-consuming job, Deborah Flanagan found balance and peace in an ancient healing art—and now she's helping others do the same.



As development director for New York's City Parks Foundation, Deborah Flanagan had little time for lunch, let alone a personal life. Responsible for raising millions of dollars a year, she spent long days at the office, attended fund-raising events in the evenings, and corresponded with donors at all hours.

Exhausted, Flanagan decided to try Reiki, a Japanese healing technique in which massage-like pressure is used to increase one's "ki," or life force energy. After her first class, she felt calm and energized. "There was a lightness and balance that really stayed with me," she says.

In 2008 Flanagan was diagnosed with a thyroid disorder that caused debilitating fatigue. "I knew my body was telling me to slow down," she recalls. Flanagan thought about her now regular Reiki sessions, which had helped her transform her eating habits and even make time to date. She wondered if she could add more Reiki to her life—and in the process, help others heal, too.

Flanagan decided to get certified as a Reiki master, which involved completing 600 hours of coursework on weekends and vacation days. She covered the cost with her savings. "It was pretty intense," she says of the training, "but it always felt like the right thing." Six months later, she started marketing her services via an e-mail newsletter to all her contacts and seeing private clients in the evenings. In 2009, three years

after her first Reiki class, Flanagan quit her fund-raising job and opened her own practice in a small but tranquil space in downtown Manhattan, where she now sees about 15 clients a week. She's also found more time and energy to pursue passions like poetry (her poems have recently been published in several literary journals).

Of course, Flanagan's tendency to over-exert herself hasn't magically disappeared, but now she prioritizes her mental well-

being. "People come to me with deeply personal stuff, from stress to anxiety to depression," she says, "and I have to be fully present. If I schedule too many sessions in a day, I lose focus." Flanagan believes her harried past makes her a more empathetic practitioner. "I love knowing I've helped someone take the first steps toward finding balance and peace," she says, "because I know firsthand what that struggle is like."

—LARA KRISTIN HERNDON



Deborah Flanagan, 39
REIKI PRACTITIONER
NEW YORK CITY