

Long Branch business helps women discover positive psychology Asbury Park Press June 11, 2018

Barbara Becker Holstein owns Enchanted Self Productions, Long Branch.



Barbara Becker Holstein, owner of Enchanted Self Productions, has a weekly podcast about positive mental health.
EVAJO ALVAREZ

Question: When did you decide you wanted to be an entrepreneur?

Holstein: I realized I was an entrepreneur when I developed The Enchanted Self as a concept in the early '90s. My discovery that women had untapped capacities for happiness, leadership and resiliency that were being stifled led to my first book, "The Enchanted Self: A Positive

Therapy." My book, one of the first books for women in positive psychology, cemented my psychological niche. Helping women of all ages access happiness and success became a driving force. I had the first website for women that was dedicated to women's positive mental health and well-being.

Q: Why did you start this business?

Holstein: I have always been so affected by seeing women underachieve and have less happiness in their daily lives. Maybe it's because of my father, Dr. Harry A. Becker, a teacher, guidance counselor, dean at the University of Bridgeport and later a superintendent of schools in Norwalk, Connecticut. He always encouraged me to develop a strong career, go for advanced degrees, never give up, that I could be the first woman president, etc. Or maybe my mother, Bernice Becker, who told me it was OK to analyze my dreams at breakfast and do a science project where I wrote in the first person as an ant in an ant colony. She was also a great role model, going to college as an adult, becoming a teacher, after her uncle told her she was "beautiful but dumb."



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Q: Were there any challenges that made you think twice about striking out on your own?

Holstein: Initially, many other psychologists did not understand or accept positive psychology. Here I was constantly pointing out to people via my books, websites, radio shows, public access TV show, newsletters, etc. what was right about themselves and how to develop those parts of themselves. Later, the greatest challenge was to develop new skills. Writing “The Truth” for girls, tweens and teens and then “Secrets” was a stretch. Self publishing them as Enchanted Self books took endless learning steps. So did revising them for Sky Pony Press. Turning aspects of them into a play, “The Locket,” was fascinating. Becoming a filmmaker was the greatest stretch of my professional life. It was at that point that my notion of Selfies as Film began to develop.

Q: If you could do it again, what would you do differently?

Holstein: If I could control my personality, I would be even more courageous.

Q: What's the best business advice you have ever received?

Holstein: Niche. Heard that again and again but took years to clearly present myself as a psychologist/filmmaker.

Q: What personality trait helps you the most?

Holstein: The drive to never give up, which I got from my parents.

Q: What's the hardest part of the job?

Holstein: Recovering from disappointments before I start again.

Q: The easiest?

Holstein: Creating and being on a team with like-minded people, particularly in the creation of my Selfie films. My films have been nominated for many awards. "Secrets, A Coming of Age Selfie Film" just won its first award as Best Experimental Film at the Brightside Tavern Film Fest in Jersey City.



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Q: What surprised you the most about running the business?

Holstein: That there were no other psychologists really on the same path. I was alone as a psychologist/filmmaker focusing on Selfies as Film.

Q: Describe your most unusual customer, job or work experience.

Holstein: Each step out of the treatment room: most recently, “The Selfie Project,” which is taking the thoughts, feelings and concerns of tweens and teens into account. A pilot show is in development. Recently on a podcast show out at Shared Universe Podcasting in Eatontown, I was interviewed by C.J. Cullen, developer of Hang on to Your Shorts Film Festival. Megan Brown, the actress in a number of my films and also participating in 'The Selfie Project', was with me. Our thoughts about the positive use of Selfies slid out into the universe as if by magic.

Q: How would you like the business to grow and change?

Holstein: I would like Enchanted Self Productions to be nationally known. I would like every school and library to have copies of my books, and access to the related films. I would like to develop more related products. I want to continue “The Selfie Project” to help youngsters more clearly express their emotions in safe ways.

Q: In one sentence, tell us why customers should go there.

Holstein: All the projects and products of Enchanted Self Productions are catalysts for positive change for kids and adults.

Q: What do you love about the community where your business is located?

Holstein: All the great people who have come into my life and work.

Q: When you leave work, do you leave the office behind, or are you always in contact?

Holstein: I’m really always in contact. As an entrepreneur I don’t think you ever leave.

Q: What do you do in your off time?

Holstein: I go to the movies, see friends, travel, exercise, think about my projects.

Q: When you leave the business behind some day, what will you do?

Holstein: I hope to never leave Enchanted Self Productions behind. I may turn it over to others, but I hope I will always have an advisory position.

Small Business Spotlight runs Mondays; visit www.app.com/smallbusiness. If you’re a small-business owner in Monmouth and Ocean counties interested in taking part in this Q&A, contact business producer Dennis P. Carmody at dcarmody@gannettnj.com.

ENCHANTED SELF PRODUCTIONS

Describe your business: Enchanted Self Productions is part of Russell M. Holstein Ph.D. LLC. My husband and I are in psychological practice together. Part of this practice includes publishing books, developing plays and films. As a positive psychologist I am always looking for ways to encourage mental health and happiness at every stage of life. I often focus on women, including girls, tweens and teens. My latest project is "The Selfie Project," where I am developing positive psychological uses of the selfie.

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