

Barefoot counsellor

LIFE

JO Ryan's zest for life is infectious.

Such energy comes in good stead for her role as a "barefoot counsellor", a term she coined for her particular brand of life coaching and counselling.

Shoes are optional at her Frankston sessions, though she herself prefers to keep herself decently shod.

"I don't want to put people off," she said. "Though if someone wants a literal barefoot session, I'm happy to oblige."

A qualified psychologist, Ms Ryan said traditional psychology focused on what was wrong with the client rather than what was right with them.

"I use 'positive psychology', which focuses on a person's strengths and how to use these strengths as a buffer against depression and anxiety," she said.

Life change is a principle Ms Ryan has embraced more than once. Her first career was as a legal secretary, which she kept up while gaining a behavioural science degree and a graduate diploma in applied psychology – combining both study and work with motherhood (her children are aged four and seven).

Once qualified, she spent several heavy-duty years as



Shoes are optional for Jo Ryan.

Picture: CHRIS EASTMAN. N42MC101

a forensic psychologist dealing with offenders. "It was pretty intense," she said.

The death of her father three years ago was also a wake-up call.

"I realised you only get one

shot at it, so you'd better make the best of it," she said.

The Mentone resident looks after her health and fitness, jogging along the beach regularly.

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