

‘The Khaki Pants Whisperer’

Just before the pandemic, Eva Talmadge, a 40-year-old freelance book editor who’d recently moved to Washington for her husband’s work, decided that she wanted to find a steady job. She was lonely, and she missed water-cooler chatter and benefits. “What I needed was the khaki pants whisperer,” she said.

Ms. Talmadge ended up reaching out to Denise Fowler, a Virginia coach whose Career Happiness Coaching website flaunts professional bona fides (including an affiliation with George Washington University) and a picture of a balloon with a happy face — a combination of the old five-year-plan type practicality with the newer focus on purpose and authenticity.

Ms. Fowler helped Ms. Talmadge to rewrite her LinkedIn bio and résumé and to translate her skills for the particular needs of the D.C. nonprofit and think-tank world.

Following Ms. Fowler’s advice, Ms. Talmadge rewrote her online materials to come across as chattier. (“Now my LinkedIn page reads: ‘Hey,’” Ms. Talmadge said.) Ms. Fowler also diagnosed other problems: “She said that Times New Roman was the baggy khaki font of resumes, so it’s now in Garamond.”

But the coach’s best piece of advice turned out to be the simplest and most spiritual one — to be open. Not long after dressing up her résumé, Ms. Talmadge overcame her reticence to brazenly network and told an email list of independent editors that she was actively looking for work.

A few weeks later, a member reached out about a gig editing for a Berlin-based think tank. Ms. Talmadge proofread her Garamond-font résumé one last time and sent it off to the organization. That’s where she works now.