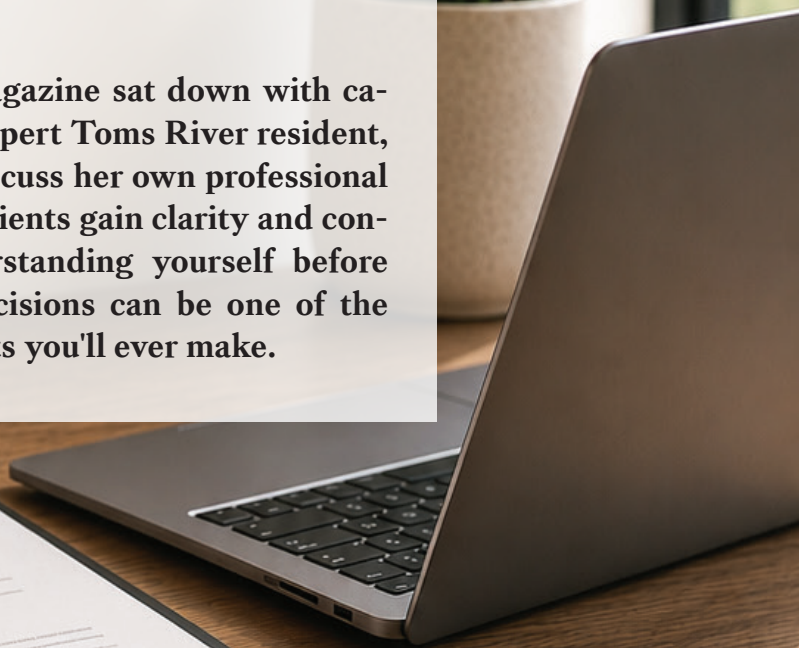


FINDING YOUR TRUE CAREER PATH

Achdus Speaks With Toms River Resident & Career Coach Mrs. Ricki Ziegler

Finding the right career isn't simply about choosing a job, it's about discovering work that aligns with your strengths, personality and long-term goals. Yet many people enter professions based on outside expectations or convenience, only to realize years later that they're unfulfilled and unsure of their next step.

This week, Achdus Magazine sat down with career coach and résumé expert Toms River resident, Mrs. Ricki Ziegler, to discuss her own professional journey, how she helps clients gain clarity and confidence, and why understanding yourself before making major career decisions can be one of the most valuable investments you'll ever make.



Welcome Mrs. Ziegler to Achdus Magazine! Please tell us a bit about yourself.

I grew up in Flatbush, Brooklyn, and looking back, I can see that many of the qualities that define my career today were already present from a very young age. I always loved writing, organizing, and bringing people together. I naturally gravitated toward leadership roles, even when I was still in elementary school.

One memory that has always stayed with me happened when I was in fifth grade. We had a teacher who struggled to keep the class focused, and one day I decided that instead of everyone complaining about the situation, I would try to do something about it. I created a behavior chart and a class contest to encourage everyone to work together and behave. I even organized prizes for the students. Looking back, it was probably one of my first experiences recognizing a problem, creating a system, and motivating people toward a common goal. At the time, I had no idea those same skills would later become a major part of my career.

Writing was another passion that started early. My father recognized that I had a talent for writing, and had actually always dreamed of becoming an author himself, and he constantly encouraged me to write. I feel thankful to my parents who had a way of noticing my strengths and encouraging me to pursue the things that I naturally gravitated toward. That same year in fifth grade, I wrote a short story and sent it to the well-known children's author Libby Lazewnik. She responded very encouragingly and told me that if I made a few revisions, she would help me get it published. Unfortunately, my fifth-grade self was a little too stubborn. I told her I liked the story exactly the way it was and didn't want to change a thing. Looking back, I smile at that memory because I walked away from a tremendous opportunity simply because I wasn't ready to accept feedback. It was an important lesson that I would only fully appreciate years later.

As high school and seminary came to an end, I had to decide on a career. I always dreamed of becoming a therapist because helping people came very naturally to me. However, the schooling required for that path felt overwhelming at the time. I also knew that I hoped to marry someone who would remain in learning, so my parents encouraged me to pursue a degree that would allow me to support a family more quickly. I chose special education because it still gave me the opportunity to work with and help people, even though deep down I wasn't convinced it was my ultimate calling.

I earned my degree while getting married in the middle of my studies and moving to Lakewood. Every week, I commuted back to Brooklyn with a baby in order to complete my coursework. It certainly wasn't easy, but I was determined to finish what I had started. I give so much credit to my parents who encouraged me every step of the way, helping to finance my degree and babysit for my daughter during those years when I was in school.

I want to mention here that years later, when I realized my true calling was career coaching, both my parents once again believed in me and encouraged me to pursue my coaching certification. My husband too, encouraged me to go after what I truly felt I would

succeed in. He always believed I had far more to offer than the positions I had taken over the years and recognized that many of my strengths and abilities were still untapped. His confidence in me gave me the push to ultimately pursue a career that would allow me to fully utilize those skills. Looking back, I realize how much both my parents' and husband's unwavering support allowed me to pursue my goals with confidence.

The truth is, if I could go back to those earlier years today, I probably would have done one thing differently. I wish I had worked with a career coach myself before choosing my profession. At the time, I simply chose the career that seemed practical and responsible, not necessarily the one that matched my strengths, personality, and natural abilities. Ironically, that realization eventually became one of the driving forces behind the work I do today.

So, what happened after you got your degree?

After graduating, I spent about seven years working in special education, including four years with Tender Touch, where I was placed in various schools throughout the Lakewood area. I truly enjoyed teaching and working with students, but I also sensed that something was missing. I always imagined myself teaching older students rather than very young children, and although I enjoyed educating others, I couldn't shake the feeling that Hashem had something else in mind for me.

Eventually my husband left yeshivah and entered the workforce, and our family schedule changed significantly. The hours that had once worked no longer fit our lives, so I began looking for an office position instead. I found one, but it didn't take long to realize that I wasn't fulfilled there either. Throughout all of these different jobs, one thing remained constant: I loved helping people, I loved writing, and I genuinely enjoyed working with people. Those themes kept following me, even though I didn't yet realize where they were leading.

One thing I never imagined was owning my own business. I always viewed myself as someone who preferred stability and security. Entrepreneurship felt far too risky for my personality, so starting a business wasn't even on my radar.

I eventually accepted a remote position because it allowed me to stay home with my children while continuing to work. That arrangement worked well until my youngest child was four months old. At that point, the company announced that everyone would now be expected to work from the office full-time. Suddenly, I was faced with a difficult decision. I realized that I didn't enjoy the job enough to justify giving up the flexibility that had made it worthwhile. If I was going to leave home every day, I wanted it to be for work that truly inspired me.

What happened next?

Around that exact time, my brother-in-law approached me with an interesting request. His niece had just returned from seminary and needed a résumé. He knew I enjoyed writing and asked whether I would write one for her. He even offered to pay me for it.

I completed the résumé, and he was extremely impressed. He looked at me and said, “Why don’t you start a résumé writing business?” That simple conversation changed the direction of my life. I decided to begin writing résumés as a side business. I really had no idea where it would lead, but I felt that this was worth exploring. Instead of continuing at the office job, I chose to invest my energy into building something of my own.

In the beginning, everything grew very slowly through word of mouth. Then I decided to become active on LinkedIn. I committed myself to posting consistently every single day, sharing helpful content and building relationships. Before long, people began reaching out to me from all over. The momentum slowly started building, and I realized there was tremendous demand for what I was doing.

As my résumé business grew, something interesting kept happening during my conversations with clients. Before writing a résumé, I would always ask them what type of job they were hoping to pursue so I could tailor the document appropriately. Surprisingly, many people didn’t know the answer.

That realization completely changed my perspective. People didn’t simply need someone to write a résumé. They first needed clarity. They needed someone to help them determine which careers actually fit their personalities, strengths, values, goals, and family lives.

Around that time, I discovered Shaina Keren on LinkedIn. She was an established career coach who trained others in her methodology. I reached out to her, and before accepting me into her program, she had me complete an aptitude assessment to determine whether I was naturally suited for career coaching. The results confirmed that I was an excellent fit, and I enrolled in the course.

Please tell us more about the course.

The training that I got from Shaina Keren was incredibly comprehensive. It included professional certification through Rockport Institute, practical coaching experience with real clients, and extensive instruction on building and growing a successful business. Since I already had an established LinkedIn presence and clients trusted my résumé writing, adding career coaching felt like a very natural progression.

Even while completing the course, I knew I had found what I was truly meant to do. Everything came naturally. The conversations, the coaching, the guidance, it all aligned perfectly with my personality. Looking back, I genuinely feel that Hashem guided me through every stage of my professional journey. Each job I held taught me something valuable, and each experience ultimately led me exactly where I was supposed to be.

Today I have the privilege of running my own career coaching practice while continuing to help clients with résumé writing as well. It has become far more than simply helping people find jobs. It’s about helping them build lives that fit who they are.

What does the career coaching process look like for someone who comes to you?

One of the first things I do with nearly every client is administer a comprehensive aptitude assessment. Many people are surprised by this because they assume career coaching begins with looking at job openings or updating a résumé. In reality, I believe it starts much earlier than that.

The assessment evaluates a person’s strengths, personality, interests, natural abilities, work style, salary expectations, values, and long-term goals. It looks at many different aspects of who they are and how they function best.

From there, we identify several career paths that genuinely fit them, not just financially, but personally as well. We discuss how each option aligns with their family life, lifestyle, ambitions, and values. Only after we establish that foundation do we begin talking about résumés, interviews, networking, and job searches.

I’ve worked with clients who are just entering the workforce, people returning after years away, and even professionals who have been in the same career for decades but know something isn’t quite right. It’s never too late to find work that better matches who you are.

What happens when someone first reaches out to you?

I like to begin with a complimentary 15-minute discovery call. This conversation allows me to really get to know the person, understand where they are in their career journey, and determine the best way I can help them. Every client comes with different goals, different challenges, and different life circumstances, so I don’t believe in a one-size-fits-all approach.

After the initial conversation, I recommend the package that I believe will best meet their needs. I offer several different service options at different price points, tailoring my approach to each individual client rather than trying to fit everyone into the same program. Once we’ve decided on the right path forward, the first major step is taking the aptitude assessment, which becomes the foundation for everything we do afterward. The basic aptitude assessment package includes two 45 minute sessions, as there is a lot of information that gets covered during these sessions.

Are people usually surprised by the results of the aptitude assessment?

I would actually say it’s about fifty-fifty. Some people are genuinely surprised because the results point them toward careers they never would have considered. But many others aren’t surprised at all, they’re simply relieved.

What I hear over and over again is, “I finally understand myself.” That is probably the most rewarding feedback I receive. Many people have spent years wondering why certain jobs never felt right. They begin questioning themselves and thinking, “Maybe there’s something wrong with me. Why does everyone else seem to enjoy this field while I struggle every day?”

In reality, there's usually nothing wrong with them at all. The problem is that they've simply been working in careers that don't match their natural strengths, personality, interests, or values. The assessment often validates feelings they've had for years but never trusted. Suddenly, everything begins making sense. Instead of feeling like they failed at a career, they realize they were simply trying to fit into a role they weren't designed for.

Considering that most people spend the majority of their waking hours at work, choosing the right career impacts nearly every aspect of life. It affects confidence, family life, finances, stress levels, relationships, and overall happiness. Helping someone find work that genuinely fits who they are can truly change the course of their life.

One thing I also try very hard to do is avoid overwhelming clients. Rather than presenting them with dozens of possible careers, I usually narrow everything down to about three carefully selected options that best match their assessment and goals. From there, we can begin taking real, practical next steps. I don't like giving vague advice. I try to be as specific and actionable as possible.

How does the résumé writing process fit into your career coaching?

The two services really complement one another. The first question I ask is, "What job market are we targeting?" That's because a résumé should never simply list someone's experience—it should be written specifically for the position they're trying to obtain.

If someone is pursuing two very different industries, I usually recommend creating two separate résumés. A résumé for one career path may not effectively highlight the qualifications needed for another.

This is where my background in both career coaching and résumé writing comes together. If someone is transitioning into a completely new industry, I help identify the transferable skills they've already developed and show employers how those experiences prepare them for the new role. For example, I once worked with a math teacher who wanted to become an accountant. By highlighting the transferable skills that she had already developed in the classroom setting, I was able to position her experience in a way that helped her secure an accounting position. I actually love this process because it's like putting together a puzzle. We connect the dots between where they've been and where they want to go. Many clients assume they're starting over, but often they already possess many of the skills employers are looking for—they just don't know how to communicate them.

Having gone through my own career transition, I can relate to what my clients are experiencing. I've also been writing résumés for many years, so combining those two skill sets allows me to guide clients through every stage of the process.

Beyond writing the résumé itself, I stay with them throughout the journey. We discuss interviewing strategies, salary expecta-

tions, negotiating raises, career decisions, and many of the questions that arise along the way. Sometimes I joke that I'm really a "career therapist." Career decisions are deeply personal, and the conversations often go far beyond jobs. People occasionally become emotional during our sessions because they finally feel understood or because they gain insights about themselves they've never had before.

When clients tell me, "This changes so much more than just my career," that's when I know I'm doing exactly what Hashem intended me to do.

It sounds like your work often goes beyond careers and résumés.

It really does. Career coaching is about much more than helping someone find a job. Your career touches almost every area of your life, and many of the challenges people experience in the workplace stem from patterns they don't even realize they have.

I remember one client who kept running into problems with coworkers and supervisors. She couldn't understand why relationships at work never seemed to last or why people often pulled away from her. As we worked together, we began identifying certain communication patterns and behaviors that were unintentionally pushing people away. During one of our sessions, she suddenly realized those exact same patterns were affecting her dating life as well. She was completely blown away. She had never connected the two before, but once she saw the pattern, everything began making sense. Moments like that are incredibly rewarding because you're helping someone gain self-awareness that can positively impact multiple areas of their life.

Of course, I also recognize the limits of my role. I'm not a licensed therapist, and if I believe someone needs professional



YOUR FULL NAME
City, State | (555) 000-0000 | yourname@gmail.com | linkedin.com/in/yourname

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY
Last line with 20 years of experience in [industry/specialty]. Known for [key strength or result].
Skilled in [skill 1], [skill 2], and [skill 3]. Seeking to [value you bring] for [type of employer].

SKILLS
[Skill 1] | [Skill 2] | [Skill 3] | [Skill 4] | [Skill 5] | [Skill 6]
[Tool/Software 1] | [Tool/Software 2] | [Certification if applicable]

WORK EXPERIENCE

Job Title Mon YYYY - Present
Company Name | City, State
[Brief one-line description of the company, industry, size, or what it does.]
• Accomplishment with a measurable result. Use a number (% , \$, volume, time saved)
• Second accomplishment. Start every bullet with an action verb.
• Third accomplishment. Focus on impact, not just what you did.
• Fourth accomplishment. List, built, launched, improved, or grew something.

Previous Job Title Mon YYYY - Mon YYYY
Company Name | City, State
[Brief one-line description of the company, what it does, industry, or size.]
• Accomplishment with a measurable result, quantify whenever possible.
• Accomplishment showing leadership, collaboration, or cross-functional work.
• Accomplishment that highlights a skill relevant to your target role.
• Optional fourth bullet if you have strong additional impact to show.

Earlier Job Title Mon YYYY - Mon YYYY
Company Name | City, State
[Brief one-line description of the company.]
• Key accomplishment from this role with result.
• Second accomplishment. Keep older roles to 2-3 strong bullets.

EDUCATION

Degree in Major YYYY
University Name | City, State

A bonus template included in Mrs. Ziegler's resume guide

mental health support or deeper therapeutic intervention, I absolutely refer them to the appropriate professional. My role is to provide career guidance and coaching, not therapy.

That being said, many people simply need someone to help them navigate the professional world. That's why I also offer standalone career coaching for clients who are already employed but want to continue growing. We work on topics such as building healthy relationships with supervisors, improving workplace communication, developing leadership skills, positioning themselves for promotions, negotiating raises, and creating a clear strategy for long-term career growth.

Many talented employees work extremely hard but simply don't know how to advocate for themselves professionally. Those are skills that can absolutely be learned, and I enjoy helping clients develop them.

You also created an affordable résumé guide. What inspired that?

One thing I realized early on is that not everyone who needs career help can immediately afford professional résumé writing services. Very often, the people actively searching for work are the very people trying to be careful with every dollar they spend.

I didn't want finances to become the reason someone couldn't improve their opportunities. That's what inspired me to create a step-by-step résumé writing guide. It's available for just \$27 and walks people through the entire process of creating a professional résumé on their own.

Of course, I still believe that having an experienced professional guide you personally produces the strongest results. Every person's background is unique, and a customized résumé is always ideal. But if someone simply isn't in a position to invest in that right now, I wanted to provide an affordable alternative that could still make a meaningful difference.

I put a tremendous amount of time and effort into creating that guide because I wanted it to be genuinely helpful, not just another

generic template. The feedback has been incredible, and it's rewarding knowing that people are able to use it to take meaningful steps toward better career opportunities. When someone lands a better job because of a relatively small investment in themselves, the return on that investment can be enormous.

What advice would you give parents and students who are planning for the future?

One piece of advice I wish more families would hear is this: before spending tens of thousands of dollars on college or professional training, invest in understanding yourself first.

I often tell people, "Before you spend \$50,000 on a degree, come see me." The cost of choosing the wrong career can be far greater than the cost of career coaching. College tuition continues to rise, and many students graduate with significant debt only to discover they entered a profession that doesn't fit their personality or strengths.

Unfortunately, many young adults choose careers because a friend is doing it, because someone told them it pays well, or because it seems like the logical next step. Very few stop to ask whether it's actually the right fit for who they are. That's why I especially encourage parents to bring their children before they make those major decisions. Whether it's a young woman graduating high school or seminary, or someone preparing to begin college, understanding your natural abilities, interests, values, and personality before selecting a career path can save years of frustration and thousands of dollars.

I wish someone had offered me that guidance when I was making my own career decisions. My path ultimately led me exactly where I was meant to be, and I'm grateful for every step along the way. But if I can help someone else gain that clarity at the very beginning of their journey, then they can start building a career that's truly aligned with who they are from day one.

I often receive calls from mothers whose married sons returned from yeshivah, entered the workforce to support their families, yet feel deeply unfulfilled, and helping them discover careers that truly match their strengths and personalities can completely transform their outlook on work and life.

What about people who feel they're meant to start their own business?

Entrepreneurship can absolutely be the right path for some people, but it's never a decision based solely on personality. We have to look at the complete picture—your financial situation, whether your spouse has a stable income, your family responsibilities, your risk tolerance, and the support system you have in place. These are the kinds of nuanced conversations that AI simply can't have. During my coaching sessions, we spend the time working through all of these factors together so that any decision to start a business is both exciting and realistic.

Do you think career coaching should begin before students enter the workforce?

Absolutely. I believe career coaching should begin while students are still in high school. Schools could provide an incredible service by bringing in a career coach once a week toward the end of high school to help students better understand their strengths, personalities, and the career paths that truly fit them. This kind of guidance could save years of uncertainty, prevent costly educational decisions that aren't the right fit, and help students begin adulthood with much greater clarity and confidence. I would love to partner with local schools by offering special group pricing and meeting with students to give them practical guidance before they make some of the biggest decisions of their lives.

How do you handle situations where family members or friends have strong opinions about a client's career path?

That can definitely be one of the more challenging parts of my job. I actually had a mother who brought her son to me because she—and much of the family—wanted him to become a nursing home administrator. There was even a job opportunity waiting for him. About twenty minutes into our first meeting, however, he admitted that he wasn't even sure that was what he wanted. His mother was hoping I would convince him to take the position, but I explained that my job isn't to persuade someone toward a particular career—it's to help them discover whether it's truly the right fit.

We went through the aptitude testing and explored his strengths, and interestingly, the results showed that he actually was well suited for that role. At the same time, I presented him with several other careers that also matched his profile and encouraged him to shadow someone in the industry and carefully consider his options. In the end, he chose to take the nursing home administrator position, but the decision came from him, not from pressure around him. I told his mother that unless he truly felt ownership over the decision, it was unlikely to succeed. My role is always to tell clients the truth, even if it's not what others were hoping to hear.

I would imagine business owners could benefit from your services as well.

Absolutely. I've worked with business owners who wanted a better understanding of their own strengths so they could build their businesses more effectively. Through the assessment process, we identified not only where they naturally excelled, but also the areas where they would be better served by hiring someone else. In one case, I helped a business owner identify the first four key positions they needed to fill in order to grow successfully. That kind of clarity can save business owners a tremendous amount of time, money, and frustration. More and more business owners are reaching out because they realize that building the right team starts with understanding both their own strengths and the types of people they should be hiring.

Any final message for the Toms River community?

Never underestimate how much the right career can impact your life. We spend so much of our time at work, and when you're in a role that truly fits your strengths, personality, and values, it positively affects your confidence, your family, and your overall happiness. Whether you're just starting out, considering a career change, returning to the workforce, or even thinking about starting a business, don't be afraid to invest in understanding yourself first. Sometimes one conversation can provide the clarity that changes the direction of your entire future.

To learn more about Mrs. Ziegler's career coaching services, call/text/what-sapp (732) 503-9206 or email coach@rickiziegler.com. You can also visit www.rickiziegler.com to learn more. ●