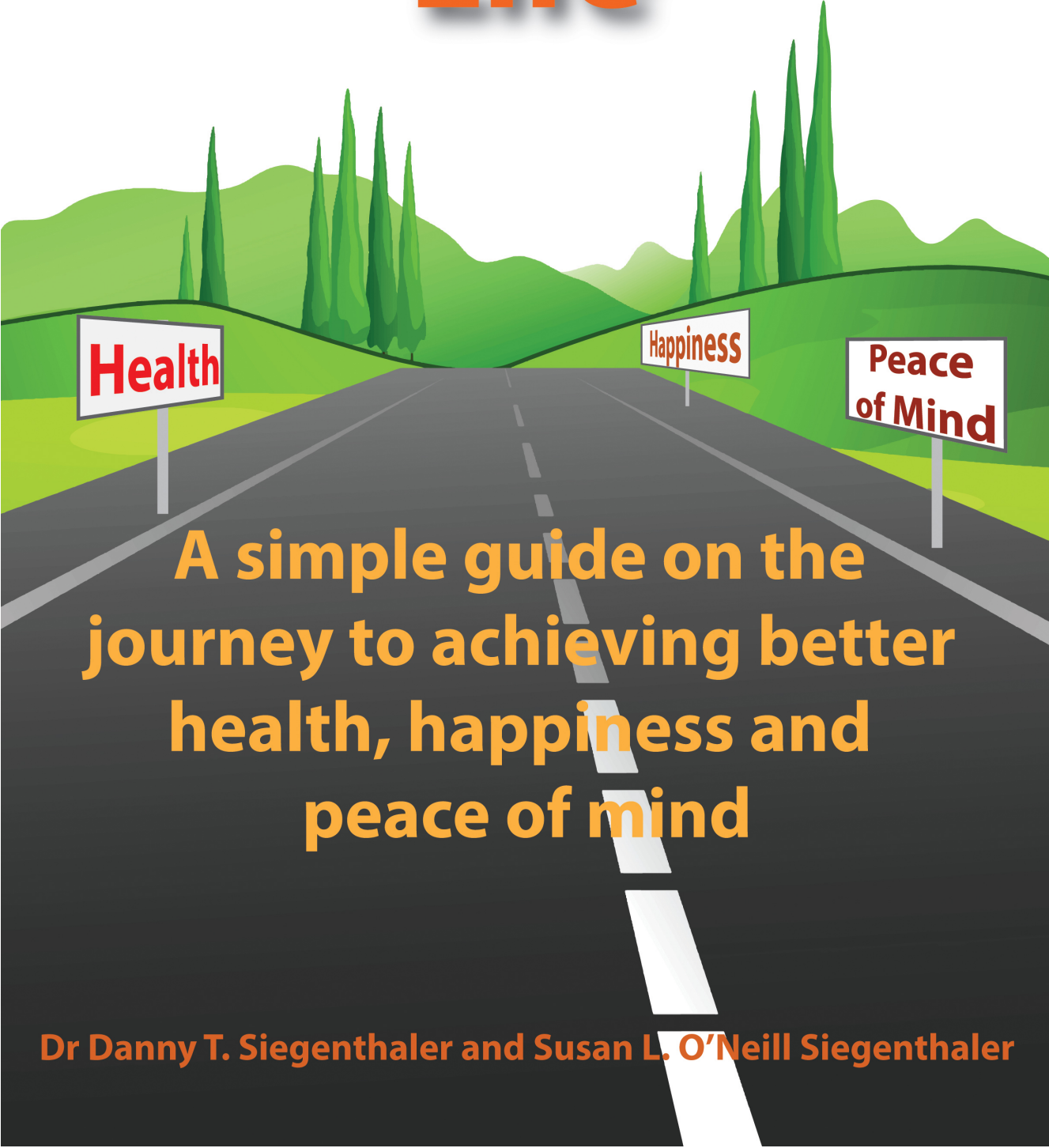


It's Your Life

An illustration of a dark grey road with a white dashed center line receding into the distance. On the left side of the road, there is a white sign with a black border that says 'Health' in red. On the right side, there are two signs: one that says 'Happiness' and another that says 'Peace of Mind', both in red. The background features rolling green hills and several tall, thin green trees. The sky is white.

Health

Happiness

**Peace
of Mind**

**A simple guide on the
journey to achieving better
health, happiness and
peace of mind**

Dr Danny T. Siegenthaler and Susan L. O'Neill Siegenthaler

As a special bonus you can download a FREE Guided Meditation by Susan Siegenthaler. Simply click or past the link below to access this free gift.

www.TheHerbalHealthCoach.com”

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Siegenthaler

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We dedicate this book to Danny's Mother, Sonja, for her ongoing support, love and encouragement.

Authors' Biography

Danny Siegenthaler is a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine with over three decades of experience in private practice. He graduated in 1985 after completing his internship at the Hangzhou Red Cross hospital, Hangzhou, China.

Danny also has a Bachelor of Science with honours and a master's in traditional Chinese medicine.

Susan O'Neill-Siegenthaler is a traditional naturopath, medical herbalist, yoga therapist and medical aromatherapist with over four decades of experience in private practice and teaching.

Susan has also completed a Bachelor of Science degree with honours and is the author of several textbooks on physical therapies.

Susan and Danny have jointly run multi-disciplinary clinics, offering their patients a broad spectrum of therapies and integrated treatment strategies.

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Introduction

Whether we like it or not, we're all getting older, and with increasing age come increasing health concerns; mental, physical and emotional stress; illness and disease. The average life expectancy is increasing, but the overall health of ageing people is not improving. In western countries, there is just as much heart disease now as there was 20 years ago. Why, you ask? Because factors such as stress, excessive work hours and lack of focus, energy and mindfulness cause us to lose control of our mind-focus. Therefore, rather than us controlling our mind, our mind controls us, leading to health issues and disease.

This book looks at practical steps that each of us can take right now to change the factors negatively impacting our lives. In this way, we can improve our health, increase our longevity and, most importantly, regain control of our minds, thereby re-establishing a healthy mind-body-spirit balance in order to live healthy, happy lives into our senior years. In this book you will find practical, useful steps anyone can put in place that are proven to improve mindfulness, health and general well-being.

As a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine with over three decades of experience and a traditional naturopath and medical herbalist with four decades of experience, we have a wealth of knowledge of how to help people just like you regain and maintain good health. We have developed many health programmes and have taught natural medicine to many of our students.

We've also published several textbooks on natural health and have owned and operated several schools of natural medicine.

In this book we draw on over 70 years of our combined experience to bring you simple step-by-step instructions on how to utilise mindfulness to optimise your physical, mental and emotional health and maintain it into old age.

Many patients who have struggled with attaining good health have already benefited from our step-by-step programmes and are now living proof of how implementing our advice has changed their health and well-being for the better.

We have lost count of the number of patients who have used this system and have come back saying “I haven’t felt this good in 20 years” or “I can’t remember ever feeling this good”.

We promise that if you follow the concepts and instructions outlined in this book you will feel healthier, stronger, more resilient to disease and even younger than you have in a long time. You might even be able to reduce pharmaceutical medication you currently have to use, because your body will begin to repair itself.

Don’t be the person who regrets not reading this book and following the sound principles it outlines ten years from now, because it does take time to turn around bad health habits. Instead, start now and reap the rewards. Take control of your health and enjoy the benefits for decades to come.

Each of the chapters in this book contains a wealth of information you can act on right now. Our methods have been proven to create positive, long-lasting results. All you have to do is continue reading this book and implement each of the ideas presented in its chapters to enjoy the new healthier you.

Please don’t wait to get started. After reading Chapter 1 and 2, which will

only take you a few minutes, begin by practising the mini-meditations and you'll be on your way.

Chapter 1: What is Health?

What exactly is good health? The Oxford dictionary defines good health as "the state of being free from illness or injury".

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines good health as "the condition of being sound in body, mind, or spirit; especially: freedom from physical disease or pain".

As you can see, different dictionaries have different definitions of what good health is. First of all, we'd like to think that good health is not just being able to get through your day without pain or injury. Good health is also about how you feel; do you feel vibrant and alive when you wake up in the morning? Do you feel alert and ready to tackle the day? Do you feel good or miserable when you get up? Are you looking forward to the day or would you rather stay in bed? Do you drag yourself along all day and can't wait to get back home and go to sleep?

Being free of illness or injury is hardly a description of feeling healthy and vibrant and alive. Merriam-Webster's dictionary has a better definition and includes the concepts of mind, body and spirit.

Therefore, good health is not just a state of being able to cope with your day-to-day activities. Good health encompasses far more than that. Good health, on a physical level, is being able to get up in the morning feeling ready to tackle the day, having plenty of energy and feeling good about the night's sleep you just had.

From a mental perspective, good health is feeling positive about who you are, what you do and where you're going (working towards achieving your goals). Good mental health also means having a positive attitude and having a drive in your life to achieve whatever it is that you wish to

achieve. How can you feel good first thing in the morning if you have no goal, no aspiration and no direction in your life? Chances are, when you wake up in the morning, you will feel unmotivated, possibly depressed and therefore not healthy, despite not having an illness or injury of some kind.

In traditional naturopathy and Ayurveda, the concept of spiritual health is one of eight primary factors that should be incorporated into one's everyday life for the maintenance of health in Body, Mind and Spirit. Each factor is of equal importance to the others. These factors are the following:

1. Living according to natural cycles/rhythms or life stage, season and day.
2. Exposure to 20 minutes of sunshine every day.
3. Drinking and bathing in pure, clean water.
4. Breathing unpolluted air.
5. Eating wholesome and natural (preferably organic) food.
6. Healthy regular exercise that strengthens and does not tax the body/mind.
7. Keeping good company with people who have a good attitude to life and support you in your endeavour to be the best you can be.
8. Daily spiritual nourishment in the form of connection to the higher consciousness and acknowledgement of the creative power that sustains all life.

Spirituality can be a controversial topic, often erroneously equated with religious ideas and dogma. However, in this context, spirituality is used as a general term that encompasses philosophy, sacred things and the individual experience of the soul, the spirit or God.

Spirituality is based upon the premise that there is something within us that connects us to a higher awareness, knowledge, goodness and purity — something that we can tap into to guide us in making the right choices in life.

Spirit can also be thought of as one's 'get up and go', 'fighting spirit' or even survival motivation. People often relate to the idea of spirit as their sacred individuality.

People can be bullied, tortured or exposed to a life of hardship to the point where their 'spirit is broken' by the experience. Sometimes we can become 'hardened' by our life experiences, losing the ability to feel compassion and kindness towards others.

Spiritual nourishment on a daily basis can take the form of reading or listening to something that inspires us to feelings of deep contentment, peace and happiness, giving us clarity of thought and decision-making.

Spiritually nourishing activities include the following:

- Meditation and prayer,
- Devotional activities,
- Service to others,
- Spending time in nature,
- Acknowledgement that there is a power greater than us that moves the universe.

The spirit cannot be truly nourished any other way.

Life can be challenging, with many ups and downs that drain us of our 'get up and go', hope, fighting spirit and vitality or cause us to close our hearts. Spiritual nourishment has the power to replenish hope and vitality,

allowing us to withstand the challenges that life presents and to meet each day with an open and compassionate attitude to life. In this way, we maintain our Spiritual Health.

Attitude and Emotion

One definition of attitude is "a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this"... But in the context of wanting to achieve a healthy, balanced mind-body state, we have to look a little further.

More often than not, attitude is considered to be either positive or negative. The idea of seeing a glass filled to 50% as being either half full or half empty tends to suggest a general attitude-position of having a purely positive or negative perspective on things. "He/she is a glass half empty type of person" is a statement we often hear being made by others who know this individual as being a negative thinker.

It is easy to have a positive attitude when things are going well and there is little or no stress in your life; however, the real attitude of an individual becomes more clear when things are tough and not going well.

There is a clear correlation between a positive attitude and the negative stress levels a person will experience when faced with a challenge or problem in their life. The more positive your attitude to a negative event is, the less dis-stress you will experience when an adverse situation needs to be faced. Dis-stress is often also associated with FEAR. Fear is usually a state of mind in which the worst possible scenario is deemed to be the most likely outcome. This is particularly true in people who tend to have a negative attitude.

FEAR is really just this:

F - False

E - Evidence

A - Appearing

R - Real.

Imagine the scenario... You're driving along, listening to your favourite music and suddenly a police car is flashing its lights at you... While you pull over, your pulse rate doubles, cold sweat is forming on your forehead and in your mind you see yourself getting a fine and probably going to jail. When the police officer approaches you, however, he simply says "Good afternoon. The reason I pulled you over is to tell you that your rear right-hand tire looks like it needs some air, so you should get it checked at the next petrol station. Have a good day, and drive carefully". Phew! Relief.

Fear is a good thing when someone is pointing a gun to your head, but not so good when a police car is pulling you over. Unless of course you know you had a couple of bottles of wine and/or were driving like a madman... Then you have plenty of reasons to feel afraid of the consequences. So, you see, it is all relative but in the main, your attitude will dictate the emotions you'll feel, and it is these emotions that will be of a positive or negative kind.

So what emotions are positive/negative? Essentially, any emotion can be either positive or negative. I hear you ask: "How can joy be negative?" Okay, joy is usually a positive emotion; however, joy and, for that matter, any other emotion needs to be in balance. You might know an individual who is always laughing and cracking jokes and never seems to take anything seriously. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), joy is the emotion of the heart, which houses the spirit of a person. Therefore, "when one is excessively joyful, the spirit scatters and can no longer be stored," states the Lingshu (The Vital Axis). However, in TCM, joy refers to a state of agitation or overexcitement, rather than the more passive notion of deep contentment. This adversely affects the heart. Over-

stimulation can lead to problems of heart fire connected with such symptoms as feelings of agitation, insomnia and palpitations. This is not to say that we should not be overjoyed when we win the lotto or another happy event takes place; that's natural. However, when there is little or no reason to be joyful, but a person still acts as if they had won the lotto, then there is something quite wrong.

Similarly, this goes for emotions such as anger, sadness/grief, fear, etc. Obviously, emotions are normal. It is when they become chronic that they start to affect the emotional balance of mind, which can then result in injuries to the organs. For example, chronic worry and fear of losing your job will begin to affect your kidneys. In the west, this is what adrenal failure/fatigue is all about. So, again, your attitude is what will guide your level of fear of losing your job; it will also guide your actions toward finding solutions in the event that you do lose your job.

Another example is chronic or unexpressed grief. I had a patient, many years ago, whose child was born with a genetic disease. The father never allowed himself to grieve or express his emotions. He kept his emotions to himself, never telling anyone how he really felt or expressing his sadness and deep grief. These emotions, in Chinese medicine, are attributed to the lungs and guess what? This man now has a chronic, irreversible lung condition of an "unknown cause"...

A balanced, or rather positive, attitude towards anything or any event is incredibly important. Yes, strong emotions are a natural, normal experience in anyone's life. However it is the attitude with which you deal with adversity that makes the difference. If a boxer decided to stay on the mat after he was knocked down the first time, thinking "I might as well stay down; I'll only get knocked down again if I stand up", then he would not have any chance of winning the bout. However, if he said to himself

“ah, that's what he's doing, I'll be able to see that coming the next time he tries it”, then gets up and looks for an opportunity to uncover the other boxer's weakness, he will likely have a much better chance to win the fight. It's all in the way you look at any given situation or challenge you're presented with. And it is your choice as to which way you choose to think. More on that later...

On the next page, there is a simple test that you can do to test your general attitude.

For each statement, write down the number in the column that best describes you. Please answer questions as you actually are (rather than how you think you should be) and don't worry if some questions seem to score in the 'wrong direction'. Once you have answered all 14 questions, add up all the numbers and go to Appendix 1 at the back of the book to reveal and interpret your score.

Source of test: mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm

<u>14 Statements to Answer</u>	<u>Not at All</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Some- times</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very Often</u>
1) When my boss or a customer asks to speak with me, I instinctively assume that he or she wants to discuss a problem or give me negative feedback.	5	4	3	2	1
2) When I experience real difficulty at work/home, I also feel negative about other parts of my life.	5	4	3	2	1
3) When I experience a setback, I tend to believe the obstacle will endure for the long-term, e.g. 'The funding didn't come through, so I guess that means they hate the project. All that work for nothing.'	5	4	3	2	1
4) When a team I am on is functioning poorly, I believe that the cause is short-term and has a straightforward solution. For example, 'We're not working well at the moment, but if we can fix this problem, then we'll do much better!'	1	2	3	4	5
5) When I'm not chosen for an assignment I really want, I tend to believe that I just don't have the specific skills they are looking for right now, as opposed to thinking I am generally unskilled.	1	2	3	4	5

6) When something happens that I don't like or appreciate, I tend to conclude that the cause is widespread in nature and will continue to plague me. For example, 'My assistant didn't "cc" me on that email she sent to my boss. Administrative assistants are all out to prove how much smarter they are than their supervisors.'	5	4	3	2	1
7) When I perform very well on an assignment, I believe that it's because I'm generally talented and smart, as opposed to thinking I am good in that one very specific area.	1	2	3	4	5
8) When I receive a reward or recognition, I tend to believe that luck or fate played more of a role than my actual work or skill. For example, 'They asked me to be the key note speaker at the conference next year. I guess the other guys were all busy.'	5	4	3	2	1
9) When I come up with a really good idea, I am surprised by my creativity. I figure it is my lucky day and caution myself not to get used to the feeling.	5	4	3	2	1
10) When something bad happens at work, I see the contributions that everyone made to the mistake, as opposed to thinking that I am incompetent and to blame.	1	2	3	4	5

11) When I win an award, recognition or contract, I believe it's because I am better than the competition. For example, 'We won that large contract against two strong competitors. We're simply better than they are.'	1	2	3	4	5
12) As the leader, when my team completes a project, I tend to attribute the success to the hard work and dedication of the team members, as opposed to my skilled leadership.	5	4	3	2	1
13) When I make a decision that proves to be successful, I believe that it's because I have expertise on the subject and analysed that particular problem really well, as opposed to being generally a strong decision maker.	5	4	3	2	1
14) When I achieve a long-term and personally challenging goal, I congratulate myself and think about all the skills that I used in order to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5

Chapter 2: Controlling Your Own Mind

You are what you think... Scientists are now saying that your mind creates your reality and that what you think about now will create itself and manifest in the future. Thinking about that is a scary thing for some people. However, if you are fully conscious of what you are thinking about every moment of your waking day, then you should be able to control what will manifest in the future. Now, that may sound a bit 'out there', so to speak, and most people think that they are already fully conscious of their thoughts at any given time. Well, I'm here to tell you that you are not.

Try this simple exercise next time you're in the shower:

Think about each and every movement you make while washing your body, how the soap feels on your skin, the texture of your skin, feeling the water from the showerhead on your back and head and how that feels. While doing this, count the number of times your mind wanders to another issue or topic that has nothing to do with you having a shower. You will be surprised.

Now this exercise will show you just how quickly and easily your mind gets away from the 'HERE and NOW' and starts to think about things of which you are almost unaware. How many times have you driven your car from point A to point B and been unable to remember how you got there, or at least part of the way?

I know this has happened to me many times. In fact, one day I was walking home from school; I remember walking out of the school gates, and then up the last little bit of the road leading to my home. I have, however, no memory at all of which way I took home or anything else along the way. Now that has stayed with me for over 40 years. It is also a

good illustration of the mind, or rather the body, operating on autopilot, while the mind/brain is off somewhere else.

To stay totally in the moment of the Here and Now is extremely difficult and yet so very important. Considering we cannot change the past and have little if any real control of the future, the only thing we all have total control over is the HERE and NOW. What we do and think about right NOW is the only thing we really have full, 100% control over.

This concept is so important and yet so underestimated. Ask any smoker whether he or she is actually aware of taking a puff on their cigarette and if they're honest, most of the time, they are totally unaware of the physical aspect of smoking. In fact, some smokers will light and smoke a cigarette and not even be aware of having done so. It's so automatic that they don't think about it at all. I should know — I used to smoke.

This illustrates just how NOT in control of our mind we sometimes are and how the mind can wander off on a given path without consciously controlling where it goes.

Try this simple exercise. It takes only one minute.

Sitting down or lying down, take slow breaths in and then out. Each cycle should take about six seconds. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose (not your mouth). Listen to the sound and feel the flow of air moving into and out of your lungs; feel your ribcage expanding and relaxing. Don't think of anything else other than breathing in and out and experience the changes in your chest.

As before, with the exercise under the shower, notice how many times your mind wants to wander off on to what you need to do later or forgot to do so far today. Each time your mind wants to go off on some tangent,

refocus on your breath... in... and out..., listen to the air passing through the nose into your lungs and feel the expansion and contraction of your chest.

Over time, as you keep practising this exercise daily, you'll find that your mind will start to wander less often and you'll notice more quickly when it does wander off. Eventually, you'll be able to keep your mind focused on exactly what you're doing for the whole minute. At this point, you are starting to be able to focus on the Here and Now. If you think this was difficult to achieve, try being that focused for a whole day.... It's a work in progress for all of us, but it's achievable with practice.

The more proficient you get, the more focused you'll get, and your energy will not get as depleted as quickly. You will also become much better at assessing any given situation less emotionally and more calmly. Over time you will actually gain greater insight into any given situation, because you will not be thinking about past failures or unrealistic future outcomes. You will be much more focused on the task or problem at hand and less scattered by the 'bad news' or whatever has just come up.

Obviously this is not something that can be achieved overnight. It takes time, patience and practise, but if you keep in mind that the only thing you have control over is the Here and Now, then what really matters is what you think and how you react to any given issue now, right now.

Here's another exercise to practice being in the Here and Now. If you have access to a little place of nature, say your backyard or even just a pot plant, look at a flower and focus on it 100%. Do not let any other thoughts enter your mind. Focus on every little tiny detail of the flower. Immerse yourself in every detail of the flower you're focusing on. You will actual notice that you relax more and more as your focus becomes more

intense. Try it.

If you don't think you can meditate, think again. By doing these simple exercises you are actually starting to meditate. Meditation is just an extension of the one-minute breathing exercise or the flower detail exercise. What you are learning in these exercises is to take control of your own mind, rather than letting your mind control you. And that's the key.

Chapter 3: Life Choices

Every action we take has a choice associated with it. You can choose, for example, to have a shower in the morning or not. You can choose to go to work or not. However, every choice has a direct consequence. For example, if you choose not to go to work anymore, your income may well take a nosedive. If that's not a problem, no longer going to work maybe a great choice. So choice and consequence are the things we'll consider in this section. However, the focus will be on how your choices can lead to a better, more fulfilled and healthier life.

So let's start with the moments after you wake up in the morning. What is the first thought you have when you open your eyes? Is it maybe "what day is this"? or "Darn, here we go again..." Or is it, "great, another day filled with opportunities"? In a previous chapter we wrote about mindfulness and being conscious of what your mind is doing at any given point in time. So, next time you wake up, check your mind and what it's thinking while you're still half asleep. Then, focus on what **you want** and what tasks you want **your mind** to concentrate on. One way to do this is to focus, the moment you put your feet on the ground, but while you are still sitting on your bed, on the sensations your feet are experiencing when they touch the ground. Then take a moment to focus on that feeling... Next, think about one single positive aspect of getting out of bed. For example, "hey, it's a beautiful morning outside", or simply be thankful that you've been given another day. Anything you can focus on that is a real positive and that you are actually thankful for. Hearing the laughter of your children, seeing your wife next to you or whatever else.

Most people wake to an alarm clock. It's usually still dark outside and if they think anything at all, it's likely to be "here we go again, another day in

the coal mines", or something along those lines. Many people simply stumble out of bed into the shower and only then start to wake up fully. This is you running on autopilot. Your body knows what has to be done and your mind is either not even awake yet or off on some negative thought pattern about how much you don't want to go to work.

Of course, some of you love your jobs and do genuinely look forward to going to work and getting into the current project, but most people don't. In fact, ask yourself this: "If I had won the 20-Million Dollar Lotto last night, would I still go to work today, next week, next month?" I'm not 100% sure that we would, and we do love our work. We look forward to seeing our patients and seeing if their health has improved since their last visit. We get a huge kick out of seeing someone's health improving and them feeling 10, 20 years younger because of their new-found level of health. It's why we go to work and put up with the parts of running a business that we really dislike. But would we continue to work at all, or even a few days a week or month, after winning 20 million... I think we'd have a long holiday and think about it.

Considering many of us spend most of our waking day travelling to work, spending 7-9 hours at work and then travelling home again, work better be rewarding, and time well spent. The majority of people who work don't like their jobs but feel they have no choice. Why? Because there's the mortgage, the credit card repayments, the car repayments, etc., etc., etc., and if you don't go to work you don't get paid, and if you don't get paid all that goes down the drain, right?

In the area where we live, there are increasing numbers of people who have executive incomes, live in executive houses and are slowly working themselves to an early grave. However, many of them are coming to the realisation that they are slaves to their jobs, houses, cars, etc., and they

are starting to make better life choices by getting rid of the huge, overpriced executive houses and downsizing. They are changing their expensive luxury cars to cheaper ones that cost less to buy and are less expensive to run and maintain. They are taking back their control of how much they work and are slowly buying back their lives. They are changing their status of slave to free simply by reducing the excesses in their lives that are actually meaningless and don't really further their long-term goals. How many parents do not see their children grow up because they are off to work before the kids wake up and come home after the kids have gone to bed? Is that what life is supposed to be like? Certainly not.

These men and women are recognising that their life choices from five or ten years ago were wrong and are now paying the price. They bought houses they could not really afford and cars that were really beyond their means and therefore used credit cards to fill the gaps. Ultimately, however, this crazy ride comes to an end and there are huge costs involved... and they are not just financial.

The divorce rate in Australia is around 35%, give or take. Why? Because the pressures on families is so great. Communication between the partners breaks down, because both Mum and Dad are too tired and stressed out to actually sit down and talk. The TV is on and everybody just gets mesmerised by what's on the box, no talking, no communicating, no quality time spent together enjoying each other's company. Before too long, Mum and Dad drift apart and the only thing keeping them together are their kids and the forever-growing debt. They can't even afford to get a divorce.

Mindfulness and being in the Here and Now can prevent these sort of disastrous decisions. If these folks had been fully in the moment and aware of what they are entering into, they would more than likely have

made different choices.

Emotions make us buy stuff we don't really need. This includes buying a house or car or anything else. Salesmanship works on your emotions, not your logical, rational mind. Therefore our emotions, even if we don't like to admit this, are usually the driving factor in making a buying decision.

I bet if I asked 100 people what they would like to have if they could have anything in the world, most would say more money (probably millions), some would say better health and a few would say a simple, happy life. Yet the ones who would say they want millions are really saying they want to be free of the slavery, the mundane job, the pressures and stress they are finding themselves under.

Well, the good news is we can all have that, but it starts with making good life choices, being aware that we are emotion-driven beings and that being in the Here and Now is the key to making good life choices that are based on realistic thinking and logical planning.

There are choices to be made in almost every single moment of our lives. Most are made with almost no thought given to them; they are almost automatic. For example, when driving to work, how often do you really think about putting on your indicator? If you want to make a turn, you put on the indicator (hopefully) without thinking "ah, I want to make a turn up there, I now need to put my indicator on". No, we don't think about that — it just happens, because our subconscious knows we need to indicate when we make a turn. When answering the phone, we don't think about moving in the direction of the phone, picking it up, etc. We just do it.

These choices are made almost automatically, without thinking or considerations. It takes a conscious choice, however, to not answer the phone but instead allow it to go to your answering machine or message

bank. In order to train our brains to be totally in the Here and Now, next time the phone rings, don't just grab it; listen to the ring, notice your arm stretching out to grab the receiver, feel its texture, temperature and weight as you pick it up and bring it to your ear. Experience picking up the phone. As you continue to do this, you will start to become more aware of your surroundings and your environment. You will start noticing things you've never noticed before. You will also become more aware of your body and you'll become more focused on your mind and what it is thinking. This is not difficult, but it requires conscious decision making, which in turn requires you to focus on what is happening right now, this instant.

Here's a little exercise you can do to start the day off in the Here and Now. Once you are awake, but while still in bed, sit on the edge of your bed for a moment with your feet on the floor. Focus on your feet touching the floor. What texture is the floor? What do you feel with the soles of your feet? Then focus on your body's posture. Feel where it holds any tension or stiffness, then get up and feel how your body's posture is changing in order to stand upright. Feel your body move as you start walking out of your bedroom. Listen to the noises around you. What can you hear? What can you smell? What do you see?

These mini-meditations may sound very simple and appear to have little consequence, but as you keep doing them, you will get better at them and will start to experience the “you” in your environment very differently.

The Pressure Cooker and You

We are so hooked in to increasing amounts of electronic communication that we barely have enough independent time to fit in a thought anymore. So how can you get a minute to yourself with your own thoughts? You're in a pressure cooker. No matter where you find yourself, there is always

something going on that takes your focus away from you. The boss, other drivers on the road, TV, phone calls, texts, Facebook, Twitter... the list goes on and on.

Some people can't even sleep in peace at night, because work insists on sending out text messages in the middle of the night. When did we sign up for that???

Is it any wonder that our brains often go on autopilot and we switch off? But here's the catch; while it's a great thing to switch off, it's not so great to go 'unconscious'. That is, we need to train our minds to be fully conscious in every moment of our lives, even when we 'switch off'.

For example, when we come home from work, still mulling over the events of the day, are we at HOME, or are we really still at WORK? If we are thinking about problems that are relevant to work, we're not really at home. Only if we leave the 'work' at work and come home to 'be at home', are we really at home.

Doors are great tools and we use them every day. Yes, they allow you to go from one room to another, but that's not what we're talking about. Opening and closing doors are actions we have to engage in physically. We literally have to open or close any given door when we wish to enter or exit a room or building. So, the door becomes a 'trigger'. A trigger is anything that can cause you to stop and think. For example, as you open the front door to your home, the act of opening the front door becomes a trigger. A trigger causes you to consciously focus on coming home, not just physically, but mentally. Once you step through that door, you, your mind and your entire being is now at home.

Similarly, as you leave in the morning, all the issues associated with your home life stay behind the front door as you close it behind you. Focus on

getting to your car, open it's door (another trigger) and set off on your way to work, fully conscious of the task (driving) ahead of you. Do you see how you can break things up into 'now I'm doing this' and 'now I'm doing that'? This allows you to keep more focused and conscious in your every action. We love doors!

Over time, you will find that you'll be able to 'be in the moment' more easily and more often. This will help you in every aspect of your life, because when you get to work, for instance, you will be focused and conscious of being at work — not at home, not on the road having a mental argument with the driver that cut you off — only at work, 100%. Your mind, after some time, will become more easily focused on dealing with all the issues that come at you at work, as long as you keep your mind's focus on work.

Furthermore, when you get home, having left behind work and your journey home, you will be more aware of what is happening at home the second you walk through the front door. This will help improve any issues with communication at home, because you'll be focused on what is happening and not simultaneously thinking about work issues and only half listening.

When we were kids, our parents used to make us sit at the table and eat our meals with them. We were not allowed to get up and leave the table until everyone was finished. This still happens in some households, but all too often there is little discipline around the table. The focus is on texts coming in or TV or some other distraction, not eating and tasting the food we are consuming.

The effect of this is far greater than you might expect. Without going into the physiological actions, reactions and interactions of physically eating

food, the mind-body connection is very much at play here. If you focus on eating and enjoying your food, tasting its flavours, textures, etc., then your digestive system and all its associated glands are engaged. However, if you're having a heated discussion or watching TV while eating, your digestive system is far less engaged and the end result could very easily be indigestion or worse. Think about it: have you ever lost your appetite when an argument suddenly broke out or you saw something horrifying on TV while eating? Did you get a knot in your stomach or start to feel sick? These types of things can start to seriously undermine your health, especially when they happen regularly.

If, however, you took a moment after sitting down at the dining room table, paused for 30 seconds and took slow in-and-out breaths, smelling the various flavours from the food in the air, and allowed your mind to focus on these smells, your digestive system would kick in and operate at its maximum capacity in order to digest the food it was about to get. The different smells tell your digestive system what you're about to eat, so it will prepare itself to digest these foods and extract the maximum nutritional value from them.

Yet how many of us do that? More often, we gulp down the food in front of us without giving it any thought, thinking instead of what program will be on the box or what work there is to be done or anything other than what we're eating.

Luckily, the pressure cooker that makes up our lives has one redeeming feature — a pressure valve that can release the build-up. To engage it, we use mindfulness exercises like the breathing exercise described earlier. This simple exercise can be employed anywhere and at any time. Sitting at a red light, arriving at your desk at work, getting into your car or the train or bus. It can be used whenever you find yourself 'under

pressure' and need to turn down that dial. Just closing your eyes for a few moments, breathing in and out of your nose and focusing on your breathing will drop your pulse rate, reduce your blood pressure and have many beneficial effects almost instantaneously. On top of that, doing this regularly will also bring you health benefits in the long run.

We use this same exercise ourselves, when we are between patients. Our clinic can get very hectic at times and we could easily get caught up in running from one patient to the next. By taking just a few moments between patients to refocus and release the 'steam', we can move on and give our best to each patient, no matter how many patients we've seen before them and how many are yet to come.

The difference this makes to us is that we don't get stressed out by the number of patients we have to see; instead, we remain mostly calm and relaxed and are therefore able to focus on each individual patient. Obviously, this has benefits for our patients too. We are less likely to make mistakes, we are not more stressed out than they are and our demeanour is calm and relaxed. All of that has a positive effect on them. They feel that we are only there for them, because we don't seem to rush and try and get them out as quickly as possible, and they like the feeling of being in an environment that promotes and exudes health and wellbeing.

When you start to control the pressure cooker, rather than allowing it to control you, you can reduce the distress that any given situation has on you, and that will ultimately improve your health both physically and mentally. Remember, the key is for you to be FOCUSED and in CONTROL at all times.

Chapter 4: Meditation

In the West, the word meditation is frequently misused and misunderstood. Meditation, simply put, is a process that enables us to focus on the present moment rather than dwelling on the unchangeable past or undetermined future. Its aim is to attain a state of mental peace and tranquillity. This does not mean you necessarily need to be sitting in the lotus position to meditate. One person may be able to meditate while doing a full day's work, while another may be very far from meditation while sitting in the lotus position on top of a mountain. It's all about being in the present and controlling your mind.

The little mental exercises we've suggested in the previous chapters are 'mini-meditations'. The idea is to start training your mind to act on a more consciously aware level, rather than you allowing it to be on autopilot. Full awareness of what you're thinking and doing at any given moment is a type of meditation. Stress tends to cause irrational thinking, emotional turmoil and inappropriate actions and reactions. In other words, stress causes you to lose control.

For example, let's say you are on your way to work and some driver suddenly cuts you off, so you have to hit the brakes hard to avoid a collision. Now what? Are you going to get all fired up and start honking your horn and abuse the driver, or are you going to just shrug your shoulders and say to yourself, who cares?

The first option will cause you to get angry and irritable, increase your blood pressure and make your adrenal glands produce massive amounts of adrenaline, which your body will then have to process over several hours to get it back to normal levels. You'll be in a foul mood when you get to work and probably tell some of your colleagues all about it, which

will raise your blood pressure again and cause more adrenaline to be released as you get angry all over again.

Shrugging your shoulders and staying focused on what YOU are doing is a much better choice for you, your mind and your body. While your adrenal glands may still produce an increase of adrenaline and your pulse rate may still rise because of the fright you got, it will not have as great an impact on your state of mind and will not aggravate the adrenal response as much. You will not get as stressed out by the incident and will remain more calm.

Here's another benefit. If you practise your mini-meditations, as you get better at them and act more often in the here and now, chances are you'll start to predict the actions of other drivers before they actually do cut you off. You'll be ready for them and can avoid having to brake hard, because you will have noticed the possibility that this driver was going to do this before they even thought about it. When they do cut in front of you, your response will be "ha, ha, I knew this so-and-so was going to do that." You won't get stressed out at all. On the contrary, it will give you something to laugh about.

Think about it another way. If you get all stressed out and curse the other driver, who will benefit from this? You won't. You might think it will feel good to tell them off, but they won't give a damn. You'll be the only one getting all upset and angry and would be allowing someone else to dictate how you feel. Is that what you really want? It's your choice.

You getting angry has only negative effects on you, your mind and your physical body. Think about how you being angry and irritated will affect the people in your office. Is it likely to make the day start on a positive note? No, not likely. But what if you told them the funny story of the 'so-

and-so' who you knew was going to cut you off instead? Laughs all around. Isn't that a much better start to the day for all concerned? Of course it is.

While this book is not dedicated to meditation, here are a few more mini-meditations you can start to practise.

THREE MINI-MEDITATIONS FOR BEGINNERS

There is a variety of ways to meditate: seated with closed eyes, seated with open eyes, in motion, using words and sound vibrations, using colours and shapes, or walking, exercising and going about your daily tasks. Some meditations are designed to take you into very deep levels of consciousness and some are more focused on improving concentration and memory or enhancing the experience of the present moment. No matter which meditation you prefer, it is well known that meditation in general has a profound effect on stilling internal chatter to develop feelings of peace and calmness.

The following meditations are easy and safe for beginners and take no more than 15 minutes to do. It is a good idea to keep a journal of your meditation experiences. You can use it to record how you felt before and after the meditation exercises and how steady you felt in your focus and attention. You will notice some variability from day to day, but should find that, overall, your experience will get better and better.

Preparing for Meditation

It is nice to have a special place – your own sacred space, if you will – to meditate and to use that space daily for your meditation practice. You can place flowers there and burn incense or essential oils to enhance the mood if you want to.

Similarly, if you choose a moving meditation such as Mindful Walking, choose a safe and pleasant place to do this, preferably outdoors.

Before commencing your meditation session, ensure that you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone/computer, put up a 'do not disturb' sign and lock the door, or let people in your home or office know that you don't wish to be disturbed for the next 10-15 minutes.

Next, make yourself comfortable, seated in a chair or on the floor if doing seated meditation. You don't want to spend your time thinking about how uncomfortable you feel rather than meditating, so this part of the preparation is important.

Now that you have taken precautions to not be interrupted, it is time to start.

1) OPEN-EYE MEDITATION

In this type of meditation, the eyes are kept open. Some people find this style of meditating to be more comfortable and enjoyable. As an added bonus, it is also a good exercise for the eyes!

You can use a candle flame for this meditation.

Sit comfortably, with your back straight but not stiff, and place your lighted candle at eye level directly in front of you. Ensure that you do not have to turn your body or your head to gaze at the candle.

Bring your attention to your breathing and begin to breathe naturally in and out through the nose, as before, breathing in slowly and out slowly and allowing a feeling of relaxation to develop.

Gaze at the tip of the candle flame and hold that gaze for as long as

possible. You may notice that you can see two flames. That is okay; keep gazing until the image returns to one flame. You may blink a few times. That is okay too, but try not to blink too much. After three minutes, or when your eyes begin to water (whichever occurs first), close your eyes and imagine the candle flame in the centre of your forehead between your eyebrows. Hold this image for one minute, then resume the candle gazing. Repeat this three times.

The last time you close your eyes, leave them closed and focus on your breathing again for a minute or two. Then open your eyes.

Note how you feel.

2) MOVING MEDITATION – MINDFUL WALKING

In this meditation, we allow the body to move and use the rhythm of the movement to calm and focus the mind. If possible, this exercise should be done barefoot. Otherwise, wear soft, comfortable shoes.

Begin by standing with your feet slightly apart and your eyes open. Clasp your hands behind your back. Feel the earth beneath your feet and connect with that sensation.

Step first with the right foot, focusing on placing the weight on the heel, then on the side of the foot to the little toe, then on to the big toe, and push off with the ball of the foot. Repeat on the left foot. At this stage you are walking slowly and deliberately, focusing on slow and precise movements.

Then take your attention to your breath, breathing in on the heel-strike phase and out on the push-off phase of the step.

Notice how your body moves to maintain balance as you walk.

Continue to walk for five to ten minutes, while synchronizing your breathing with your steps. Keep your movements slow and deliberate.

When you finish, come back to standing with your feet slightly apart and note how you feel.

3) BLUE-SKY MEDITATION

This is a seated meditation that teaches us to still the mind and ignore the thoughts and feelings that move through it. We begin by imagining the mind as a clear and sunny blue sky. Any thoughts or feelings that arise we see as clouds passing across the sky. The clouds may be heavy and dark or light and wispy – it doesn't matter. Just let the clouds pass across the mind and disappear without focusing on them.

Ideally, this meditation should take ten to fifteen minutes, but you can start off with five to ten minutes and increase the time as you become more practiced.

Sit comfortably and close your eyes.

Begin to breathe. As you breathe in, hear the sound "so". As you breathe out, hear the sound "hum". Focus on these breath sounds for a minute or two as you breathe slowly and naturally.

Then, in your mind's eye, take your concentration to the point between your eyebrows. Imagine a bright golden light there, like a bright candle flame.

Continue to focus on this image. If thoughts or feelings arise that distract you, let them pass by like clouds across the sky and return your focus to the golden light between your eyebrows.

When you are ready to finish your meditation, rub your palms together and then gently massage your eyes and open them.

Note how you feel.

These simple meditations have great benefits when practiced regularly. They don't take long to do, so pick the one you like best and practise it daily for six weeks.

Chapter 5: Work/Life Balance

We briefly touched on this in Chapter 3. We talked about some folks buying back their time by reducing the 'excesses' in their lives after realising how overstretched they were financially, living as slaves to their rising debt.

These days, the phrase 'good work/life balance' is very popular, but how many people do you know that can actually say they have a good work/life balance? Not many, I bet. And what exactly is a good work/life balance anyway?

The ideal work/life balance will differ between individuals and will depend on many factors, including the following:

- Age
- Job satisfaction
- Marital status
- Goals in life
- Financial situation

Basically, if you feel happy doing the work you do for a living, your work does not interfere with your private/family life, you feel happy with the amount of time you can devote to yourself and your family and you are making ends meet, then you probably have a reasonably good work/life balance.

However, if you hate your job, it interferes with your time with your family, etc., then that's probably not a good balance.

As practitioners, even loving what we do, it is very easy for us to allow

work to become all-consuming. When you run your own business, there is never a time that it's not on your mind, at least on some level. We have been doing this for over 30 years and there have been times when all we did was work, eat and sleep. That's fine for a short time, but it is not sustainable. Burnout in our profession is very high. Why? Because while you may love what you do, you can only expend so much energy for so long before you run your energy-tank dry.

So in order to avoid burnout, we made a decision a long time ago to only work three and a half days a week and have the other three and a half days off to enjoy doing other things, like growing medicinal plants and vegetables, playing with our animals and spending time together. The other consideration was our patients. How can we talk to them about needing to sort out their work/life balance if all we do is work, work, work? We figured that if we led by example then more of our patients would see that what we are talking about is actually do-able, not just theoretical.

We now work half the week seeing our patients and getting the business side done and the other half staying as much as possible away from the business of work and getting stuck into the business of life. And it works, mostly. Naturally, there are times when we need to invest a bit of our business-free time into our business. These are usually times when we want to start a new project, like writing this book or designing courses for our online students. At these times, we invest a little of our business-free time into our business, in order to get more free time in the long term. We think that's a good time investment, and it's fun.

So how can you achieve this?

Take a piece of paper and start asking yourself some important questions.

- 1) What are my debts?

Make a list of everything that you need to make repayments on, such as your mortgage, car, credit cards, store cards, etc.

2) Which of these debts could I reduce?

Take a hard look at each of these items and think about ways you could reduce them. For example, would you be able to live with a less expensive car that would cost less in repayments? Can you think of a way to more quickly repay the credit and store cards? There are good deals around if you transfer your current credit card debt to another bank or lending institution. The trick here is to cut up the new credit card the moment it arrives in your hands and never, never, never use it again. Just pay it off and that's that.

As you can't transfer store cards, you need to think of a different way to get them off your back. One way is to save all the change you get every day and, at the end of the month, add the change to the minimum payment required. If you can add another \$10 or \$20 or more to your repayment, all the better.

Look at the house you live in. Is it just perfect for your NEEDS or could you just as easily live in a slightly smaller, less expensive house? This is a big question and you will grapple with it. After all, who wants to go through the hassles of selling a house and moving to a new place? But, if this move serves the purpose of improving your quality of life, then it may well be worth considering.

3) Where can I save money that does not detract from my enjoyment of life?

There are a couple of steps you need to do here to identify where your money goes. Let's face it, we tend to spend money and then, at the end of

the pay period, not really know where it all went.

Step 1: For one month, get a receipt for every single dollar you spend and start making a list of your every expenditure. Include everything down to coffee – every single purchase, regardless of how small.

At the end of the month, have a close look at where your money went. You will be surprised.

Step 2: Consider which of the purchases you've made could be eliminated. For example, say you buy a coffee every morning on your way to work, which costs \$4 dollars. You buy this five times a week, which adds up to \$20 dollars for coffee on your way to work. Over a month that's close to \$100 dollars. Could you make a coffee before you leave and take it with you in a thermos cup?

Step 3: Thinking of the example of buying a coffee on your way to work, try and identify other unnecessary expenditures. You will probably find that there are several other purchases you make on a regular basis that you could easily do without.

Doing this will help you to identify where you could easily, without any sacrifice, save up to several hundred dollars a month.

Step 4: Put these findings into action and use the money you save to pay off the store cards. Or add it to your mortgage repayments, once your store cards are paid off. The golden rule here is to pay off the debt that has the highest interest associated with it first.

If you do this, you will find your debt reducing very quickly, which will liberate you. You are taking control. You are making choices in your life now that will improve your quality of life and peace of mind, opening more

options for you in the future. Yes, it might take a couple of years to get rid of all the cards, but once they are gone, that's it.

The money you'll save on interest alone will allow you to pay off your less expensive car in no time.

Before you realise it, your debt mountain will have reduced down to just the mortgage, which is much less of a problem on its own. You may end up with the option to only work four days a week instead of five and spend the extra day with your children or partner, or participating in a hobby. Would this be worth making a few small sacrifices?

This is basically simple common sense and the application of some self-discipline.

The benefits of doing this for a relatively short time in your working life are almost countless. A few of them follow:

- Less stress
- A reduced chance of cardio-vascular disease
- Better health generally on a physical, mental and emotional level
- A more harmonious home life
- More free time to spend with your family and do whatever you like to do
- Reduced financial pressure
- Reduced levels of anxiety, leading to better sleep at night
- Increased options and choices due to reduced financial pressure
- More money in your pocket...

You may wish to fill in what it would mean for you here:

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The health benefits alone are worth every single small sacrifice you have to make.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), of the 56.4 million deaths worldwide in 2015, more than half (54%) were due to heart disease and stroke. These diseases have remained the leading causes of death globally for the last 15 years and are largely caused by stress and inappropriate stress management, such as excessive alcohol intake, poor diet and lack of exercise.

Stress is the number one killer, not because it is a disease as such, but because it leads to so many potentially deadly diseases. Therefore, reducing this stress, or rather distress, in our lives should be one of our top priorities, shouldn't it?

The negative health effects of stress on a person can manifest in every single system in the body: the nervous system, the endocrine system, the reproductive system, the digestive system, the musculoskeletal system, etc., etc., etc. Every single organ and body system can be adversely affected by stress. The importance of reducing and managing stress to good health, longevity and life quality cannot be overstated.

More than 80% of the patients we see in our clinic suffer from mild to

severe levels of stress that causes them anxiety, headaches, insomnia, high blood pressure, and so on. Not only does it affect them personally, but it also affects their families in a negative way. Anxiety and depression has many side effects on the people around the sufferer. They can be withdrawn, always tired, bad tempered, etc, causing a range of tensions within the family. Things just go downhill from there. Drugs to control depression and/or anxiety will most likely have side effects and all they do is 'control' the symptoms without addressing the cause.

Achieving a healthy work/life balance is a challenge, but if you can come to grips with the challenges and turn them into a journey of freeing yourself from slavery, the gains far outweigh the sacrifices.

Exercise

The next challenge in a healthy work/life balance regime is exercise. Most people do not like to exercise. Unfortunately, going to the gym and sweating your backside off is not really that healthy and not all that beneficial in the long term. It is often also not sustainable and many people who go to gyms end up with injuries, leaving them worse off than they were before they started their exercise programs.

So, what should you do?

Well, exercise is basically anything you do that makes your body move and increases your pulse rate for some period of time. That means you can go for a brisk 20-minute walk, go swimming, play a sport like football (yes, the type where you use your feet to kick an actual ball) or tennis, ride a bicycle, etc.

The one key that's necessary here is the following: YOU HAVE TO ENJOY IT. It must be more like a hobby than a chore. No one likes doing

chores, but we all like our hobbies. So turn your exercise into a hobby and you'll never want to stop doing it. It's as simple as that. The more you love doing something, the more you want to do it and the better you want to get at it, no? So, why bother pushing dumbbells around, hating every minute of it, when you could replace that with a hobby you enjoy and love doing as often as possible.

Personally, I don't have anything against gyms, apart from the fact they are very smelly, unhygienic and unappealing to me. I'd much rather spend time playing a game of football or a round of golf, swimming or doing some physical work on a farm, but that's my personal preference. I simply would rather fill my lungs with fresh air than that found in most gyms.

Exercise should be a hobby you wish to pursue, rather than something you know you have to do but hate. That is actually just as unhealthy as not doing any exercise at all. The only difference is that the adverse consequences are going to be different. Suffice it to say, make exercise a hobby instead of a chore and before you know it, it will start to work for you without requiring a lot of effort.

Food and Diet

As healthcare professionals, we are exposed to every diet and new dietary fad you can imagine. Most of them are totally unsustainable and many of them are downright wrong, if not dangerous. Having said that, there are diets that are both healthy and sustainable. Even so, they don't work in the same way for everybody. Think about it from this point of view. If someone is overweight and has high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol while another person is suffering from being underweight, lacks energy and has an under active thyroid, do you really think the same diet would work equally well for both these patients? NO, of course

not.

We are all individuals with individual needs. What works well for one person may be totally wrong for someone else. The idea that one particular diet will work for all people is ludicrous.

There are, however, some basic principles that will work for most people, most of the time and are sustainable.

1) Eat as little processed food as possible, or none

Basically anything in a packet, tin or can is processed, at least to some extent. That means that the content has been subjected to some kind of processing, be that heating or the addition of additives to improve flavour, shelf life or some other quality. Canned foods are a classic example. Most have been heated and contain additives to enhance the flavour and of course some kind of preservative.

So, fresh is best.

2) Seasonal food

These days, we can buy any fruit or vegetable in the supermarket, regardless of whether it is in season or not. This is great in terms of the choices available, but there is a reason that fruits and vegetables grow in a given region in a given season.

Most nutritionists are not aware of this, but food has energy and so do seasons. A vegetable or fruit that grows in winter will have a different energy from one that naturally grows in summer. Chinese, Ayurvedic and traditional naturopathic medicine all recognise this and use these foods to balance the body's energy. Remember, food is medicine.

Just think about all the different herbs that you can use to flavour your meals – garlic, turmeric, parsley, ginger, peppermint, paprika, pepper and chilli, to name but a very few. These herbs are some of the most powerful used by herbalists, irrespective of which system of medicine they use. For example, garlic is one of the most powerful, natural antibiotics around. Turmeric is now being looked at for its anticancer properties, ginger is great to regulate the digestive system, as is peppermint, and so on.

In Chinese medicine, for example, vegetables that are ripe and ready to eat in summer tend to be considered cooling, while vegetables that are harvested in winter are said to have more warming qualities. Just like the seasons, our bodies go through seasonal cycles. It therefore only makes sense to eat the foods that correspond to a given season.

The effect of the seasons on our general health has been known for many centuries and is advocated strongly in traditional naturopathy and Ayurvedic medicine. It is seen as part of living in harmony with nature.

These days, due to modern farming practices, refrigeration and international trade, just about every food imaginable is available all year round. We have come to expect to be able to get any food we want at any time of year, but not so long ago this was not the case. Fruits and vegetables were only available when they were ‘in season’, that is, at the time of year that they grew naturally and locally.

The argument for eating seasonally is justified for reasons that include not only health, but also economic considerations. Foods available out of season require specialised growing facilities to survive if grown locally or must be imported from other countries, making them more expensive.

Our bodies are composed of the same basic elements as plants and animals and, like plants and animals, our bodies are dynamic, ever

changing and adapting to the environment – changing with the seasons. Therefore, our dietary needs also change. Eating seasonally also applies to the changing seasons of our life: children require a different diet to adults and elderly people. Likewise, people who are ill require different nutrition than people who are healthy.

Eating foods that are available locally and seasonally enables the energy systems of the body to remain balanced and provides better nutritional balance as well. Surprisingly, it is much easier to develop nutritional deficiencies and imbalances when any food we want is available constantly. Eating winter foods in summer can result in excessive carbohydrate intake, whilst eating salads and cold foods in winter can be harmful to the retention of body warmth and undermine digestive function.

Using a temperate climate as an example, it is no accident that citrus fruit, grains and root vegetable crops tend to ripen in late autumn, making them available as foods in the winter time, when our bodies require more nourishment and warmth (grains and citrus fruits have a warming quality).

In the spring, leafy green vegetables are naturally more abundant and this is the time when our bodies need to become lighter after the relative inactivity of winter.

In the summer, fruits in general and some root vegetables are more abundant. This is a time when we need foods that are generally cooling to the body to help us to cope with the summer and autumn heat.

Seasonal eating also impels us to eat local produce; better still if we can grow it ourselves!

If you want to try seasonal eating, there is a wealth of information available online about the foods in season in your area.

3) Meal time

In the West, we tend to eat our largest meal at the end of the day. Now, logically we all know that is the wrong time of day to supply our body with the highest amount of nutrition. We all know we should be giving our body the biggest meal at the start of the day so it can actually use it during the day. Lunch should be smaller than breakfast, but still be sufficient to carry us through to the end of the day, and dinner should be light and easy to digest. What do we do? Exactly the opposite, and then we wonder why we have problems with obesity.

However, different people have different metabolisms. Some folks metabolise food very quickly and efficiently, while others have a slow metabolism, so their bodies process food slowly. This is where what you eat and how much you eat becomes even more important.

We are now also entering into an area that actually requires individual professional help, so I won't go into this any further, except to say that because we are all individuals, it is necessary for each of us to have an individually tailored diet. But this does not mean you have to make different meals for every member of your family. If you stick to the basic principles outlined above, you will soon start seeing the benefits of eating fresh, seasonal, healthy foods.

Chapter 6: Healthcare

This is a large topic and could fill not just one but several books. However, here we will focus on why using systems of medicine such as Chinese, Ayurvedic and traditional naturopathic medicine is, for the most part, preferable over using other systems.

These systems of medicine have been around for thousands of years. More people, worldwide, use these over any other system of medicine, including our western medicine. India and China have the largest populations in the world, each around 1 billion, so their systems of medicine work and have done so for a long, long time.

In the main, they do not focus on killing a virus or bacteria and they do not treat individual diseases as such. Instead, they look at the patient as an integrated living being who is more than just a disease. The patient is an individual who has become ill because factors in their environment and in their lifestyle have caused their otherwise perfectly well-balanced system to go out of whack. These systems of medicine treat the whole person, taking all aspects of their lives into consideration and then treating the person holistically. That means treating not just their Arthritis or high blood pressure or other specific problem, but the whole living interconnected being.

This is vastly different from what the western system does. It targets specific dysfunctions with drugs that will do what the body is not doing, rather than helping the body to regain its functionality. In some cases, this is all that can be done. However, more often than not, a holistic approach will correct the dysfunction, with the added bonus that the patient will not become dependent on drugs for the rest of their life.

There is a big problem with western medicine that is so obvious it's ridiculous. Drug companies are owned by shareholders, and these shareholders invest their money in these companies with an expectation of making money, having the share price rise and getting dividends each year. Therefore, it is a company's responsibility to maximise their profits and then share this with its shareholders.

Here's the problem. If you were a company and had the choice to make either product A, which the patient would need to take for 3-6 months, after which they would be free of the disease and would no longer need the drug, or you could make product B, which the patient would have to take for the rest of their life, which do you think would be more profitable to you and your shareholders? It's as simple as that.

Unlike the western system, Chinese, traditional naturopathic and Ayurvedic medicine were not built on a corporate system, but were practised by village doctors. They grew the herbs in their natural surroundings and picked them as needed. They used acupuncture, which involves stimulating points on the body that help the body to regain normal function. They used a range of exercise therapies, such as Yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong, to teach their patients how to retain their health. These systems did not evolve around a capitalistic model of healthcare. Western medicine is the only system of medicine that views itself as a money-making industry.

So, it stands to reason that if you want real healthcare, you need to think seriously about which system or systems you want to use to maximise your chance of a healthy old age. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that western medicine is useless. Not at all. It does have its uses. For example, its emergency medicine is the best there is. The lifesaving drugs used on patients having strokes or heart attacks are second to none. Emergency

medicine in the West is highly effective and we would be all the poorer if we didn't have it. Also, some drugs can be vital if, for example, you have severe diabetes. However, for health problems that do not require lifelong drug therapy or emergency care, other traditional systems of medicine offer far better solutions.

There is also no reason why western medicine and the other systems cannot be used together. We frequently have patients who are taking some drugs prescribed by their GP along with herbs from us. Often, they are able to stop the drugs after some time and eventually stop the herbs as well.

We also want to make the point that your GP is not the same as a drug company. Many GPs are frustrated with the tools they have at their disposal and some even take up herbal medicine and/or acupuncture to provide their patients with better alternatives than strong drugs with potentially harmful side effects. This shows that the system they have to use is not all it's cracked up to be and many of them are looking at alternatives to integrate into their practice. Some stick to what they do, preferring to be the best they can be at what they do, and refer patients to practitioners like us. Together, we address the problems presented by these patients. This works very well and is often very successful.

What systems of medicine are there?

It depends a little on your definition of what represents a true system of medicine.

Generally speaking, a true system of medicine addresses the mind, the body and the spirit of a person and aims to maintain good health. It is also capable of treating disease on all of these levels to bring a patient back to a healthy mind-body state.

If we accept this definition, then there are very few systems that tick all the boxes. In our opinion, there are really only two, maybe three. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and Ayurvedic medicine address mind, body and spirit; they aim to maintain good health and are able to correct/treat disease states once they become established.

Orthodox medicine is not really a true system, because it focuses purely on the body. The mind is treated by psychiatry and the spirit is addressed by religion. Orthodox medicine does not recognise energy as a constituent of an individual (some doctors do, but their 'system' of medicine does not).

Herbal medicine, used in isolation to treat patients, is also not a complete system, unless other forms of therapy, such as Yoga, Tai chi, massage, dietary advice and some level of counselling, are included. Now most western herbalists do have the ability to integrate other 'therapies' into their skill set, but if all they do is prescribe herbs without looking at the mind, body and spirit connections, they are not practising a holistic system of medicine.

Homeopathy is not a system. Naturopathy should be a system, but the way it is practised today in many western countries is not, because it primarily focuses on prescribing supplements, some herbal therapy and dietary advice. Traditional naturopathy and traditional herbal medicine, however, are systems of medicine, because they include therapies such as hydrotherapy, iris diagnosis, massage, dietary advice, body realignment therapy, Bach flower therapy, aromatherapy, exercise therapy and basic counselling. This is what true traditional naturopathy and traditional herbal medicine is, and we differentiate between 'modern' naturopathy and traditional naturopathy, as well as between herbalism and traditional herbal medicine.

Obviously, we could debate this till Sunday next week, and ultimately it does not really matter. If you are interested in being treated on all levels and have your practitioner use an integrated approach, then traditional Chinese, Ayurvedic or traditional herbal medicine are your key choices.

This does not mean that you shouldn't use homeopathy or naturopathy or any other treatment modality. We're just differentiating systems of medicine from therapies and treatments.

For example, if you are suffering from dangerously high blood pressure, you need to be on an anti-hypertensive drug, but this does not mean you can't also see a doctor of Chinese or Ayurvedic medicine to help you regain better health, address other underlying problems and hopefully, in the process, reduce your blood pressure to a point where you may not need to take the anti-hypertensive drug anymore.

Unfortunately, especially in the West, we have grown up with the idea that when we are healthy we don't need any medicine. Once we get ill, we go to our doctor and he or she will prescribe us a medicine that will make us better. Once we're better, we don't have to take the medicine anymore and that's that. Chinese medicine teaches that we should go for seasonal check ups to our doctor of Chinese medicine so he or she can 'tune up' our body's energy in readiness for the coming season. By doing this, we make ourselves more likely to avoid the seasonal cold and flu, rather than having to go and get them treated later on. Ayurvedic medicine is the same in this regard. The old motto "prevention is better than cure" comes to mind here. That's exactly the philosophy we adhere to when we get our cars serviced. We want to make sure our cars don't break down so that we have trouble-free motoring. For some reason, however, we don't take the same approach with our bodies, even though logic dictates we should.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Congratulations! You have started on your journey to better holistic health by reading this book and hopefully beginning to put some of its advice into practice.

It may not be an easy journey for some of you, and on it you will certainly have to face some of your inner demons, but with perseverance and by keeping your eyes firmly fixed on your goals, you will ultimately achieve better mental, physical and emotional health.

While we have covered many topics, we have tried to keep this book as easy to read and implement as possible. However, as a result, we did not go into great depth or discuss complex theories. Nevertheless, following the principles outlined in the book and implementing the mini-meditations will provide you with a great start on your path.

Remember, it's all about baby steps. Take one step at a time. Don't be hard on yourself if you fall into old habits. Recognise that you are doing so and take positive steps to correct yourself.

This book aims to provide you with practical hints and tips to regain and maintain your optimal health, gain more control of your emotions and find a better way to handle distress.

We have talked about how your attitude can increase or decrease your stress levels, we've looked at how you can use your mind and attitude to change how you react or feel about a situation and we've talked about how to be more mindful and focused on the Here and Now. Remember, it is only in the Here and Now that you can implement direct change and influence what your future will be like. You cannot change the past and

your future depends on what you do, how you think and how you act right now.

We also covered how to make exercise something you enjoy and want to do by making it a hobby rather than a chore. Physical activity on a regular basis is very important to our physical, mental and emotional health. Therefore, it is important that this activity is fun and enjoyable.

One of the key parts of this book is the set of mini-meditations. Everyone can meditate, but it is a learned skill that is acquired over time. The mini-meditations are a great way to get started and provide an ideal entry level to get familiar with and start to enjoy the sense of a relaxed and calm mind.

We also talked about using natural health to regain and maintain your optimal health. Obviously, if you're suffering from a major disease or health issue, you should talk to your healthcare professional before you embark on your journey. This book is not intended to give healthcare advice or provide a do-it-yourself approach to healthcare. You should always discuss any changes you plan to make to your healthcare regimen with your healthcare professional before you start.

Finally, we hope this simple step-by-step guide will help you to create a healthier, happier life. Remember, it's all about baby-steps. One step at a time.

You can get additional help by connecting with us via the HerbalHealthCoach (more on that in the following section).

Chapter 8: Where To Go From Here

Healthcare starts with the individual: what we choose to eat, how we choose to exercise and what type of healthcare we choose. It is a complex topic, but it does come down to some simple basic steps.

1) Eat healthy, mostly unprocessed, seasonal fresh food. 80% of a meal should be vegetable-based. Drink two to three litres of water daily and avoid drinking too much coffee, tea and alcohol.

2) Start an exercise regimen in which the exercise is fun and engaging for you, such as a sport that necessitates some training and physical activity between games. Or if you're not into team sports, pick something that you enjoy doing on a very regular basis, such as Yoga, walking, riding a bike or swimming.

3) Maintain your health like you maintain your car and other equipment you depend on. Use holistic forms of medicine wherever possible. Use drug therapy if absolutely necessary.

4) Learn to meditate. The exercises within this book are a great start. Meditation, once you've attained a reasonable level of competency, will help you to minimise your stress levels, improve your overall health and have more control over your emotional self.

The impediment that usually causes these simple steps to become difficult is that the individual undertaking the journey of improving their health and wellbeing stumbles easily, loses motivation and then ends up back where they started from. This is why we have developed the TheHerbalHealthCoach.

TheHerbalHealthCoach is a systematic approach to helping individuals

like you maintain a regimen and achieve goals.

Not only do you get advice from healthcare professionals, but you also have a place to get increasingly more information and real help. Let's face it: most of us have difficulties maintaining high levels of motivation. Losing focus and intention can happen at the drop of a hat. Look at gym memberships. Most gym owners overbook their registrations because they know that most people will attend a few times and then drop out. Something happens in their life and it stops them from going back to the gym as often as they were planning to. Eventually, they stop going altogether. Yoga classes are the same. They are full to the brim at the beginning of a term, but by the end only half the original participants are still left.

That's exactly why we developed TheHerbalHealthCoach. It provides regular information and 'check ups' from us to see how you're going and what your challenges are, so we can help you overcome them.

If you want more information about TheHerbalHealthCoach, contact us via TheHearbalHealthCoach@gmail.com

Don't wait to get started. Here and Now is the time and place to take action. Just do it.

Appendix

Results for Attitude Test

Look for the “Your Score” range that your results fall into and read the “Comment”.

Your Score: 14-31

Comment: You feel like there is a great, big cloud hanging over your head all day. You’ve allowed yourself to get into a habit of seeing things as being your fault and have given up control in many aspects of your life.

Do not despair; you’re taking this quiz, which means you recognise that there is something wrong and are willing to change things in your life.

Continue reading this book and following the exercises we’ve provided on a regular basis.

Your Score: 32-50

Comment: You try to be optimistic and positive, but some situations get the better of you. Identify your triggers for negative thinking and use the mini-meditations in this book to become naturally more optimistic.

Your Score: 51-70

Comment: Great job! You have a generally positive and optimistic outlook on life. You don't take things personally and you are able to see that setbacks won't ruin the rest of your life.

You have a “I get knocked down, but I get up again” attitude that will help you get through life's challenges and keep you heading in a positive direction.

Summary

The more positive you are the better. This attitude test helps you to assess your level of positive or negative thinking. Here, awareness is key. If you are aware of your negative thoughts, then you can change them to emphasise and focus on the positive ones.

We have all heard the saying “negative thinkin' is stickin' thinkin'”. If your mind tends to think negatively about any given situation or about yourself, then you are programming your mind to attract negatives.

Positive people like to hang around positive people, and positive people tend to attract positive events and luck into their lives. They are not better than the negative thinkers, they just think differently and therefore attract different things, which tend to be of a positive nature.

If we recognise our tendency to think negatively, then we can change it. Therefore, don't get hung up on the result of your attitude test, even if it was less than 50. Instead, take onboard the idea that there are tendencies in your way of thinking that can and need to be improved. Use the mini-meditations to focus your mind on the Here and Now. That's where you can consciously change your attitude and way of thinking.

Once you've worked through this book and have spent some time practising the mini-meditations, you might want to re-do the test, or go online and find a different attitude test, and see if your results have improved. Do this from time to time to assess your progress.

