



PART 1.

FOUNDATION

There's a part of you that knows that life can be absolutely magical, rather than a perpetual struggle or a series of compromises. You've seen people embody this magic and, chances are, they left an unforgettable impression on you. Although it's far more common to succumb to the doubt, disappointment, and drama that surround us, we're here to remind you that another option is available to you: a life of balance and accomplishment, an experience of trust and ease, a feeling of being aligned with your purpose, and an ongoing awareness of the tremendous gift that is your life.

We'll share some hard science and many pragmatic tools for managing your life, but the drive to write this book had nothing to do with the academic stuff. It came from our having this inner knowing—it came from the awakening part of us wanting to support the awakening part of you. The big question is, when will you be ready to give yourself over to this awareness and allow your life to blossom?

CHAPTER 1.

THREE ELEMENTS FOR A WELL LIFE

UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURE, SWEETNESS, AND SPACE

Look at the Big Picture to Find Your Well Life

Our ability to remain focused, balanced, and healthy in the midst of our busy lives can be partly credited to our background as practitioners of Eastern medicine. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Ayurveda emphasize that it's better to recognize and correct imbalances early than it is to mistreat oneself and attempt to make large repairs long after problems arise. The early detection of imbalance stems from the origins of Eastern medicine, more than 2,000 years ago, in the keen observation of nature. These systems teach that the dynamics of the natural world have parallels in all domains of human life—that is, we're not as different or separate from our environment as we may act and think.

From this perspective, human health is seen as an expression of countless factors—from our thoughts, emotions, and bodily functions, to the many ways we relate to our environment, such as through diet, behavior, community, climate, and more. These ancient arts look at the biggest possible picture, and within the vast tapestry of

interacting substances and forces, they discover multidimensional patterns of imbalance. The ability to see the connection between imbalances in many different areas of life allows for more complete and effective solutions.

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In our medical practices, while we addressed many of the usual things people go to a doctor for, we repeatedly saw the need to help our patients expand their ideas of what good health means. As we were asked with increasing frequency about issues relating to life structure and balance, we grew to understand that the kinds of *full spectrum* skills our clients seemed to see in us—such as earning a living by doing work that’s aligned with your values; setting and achieving goals; maintaining sanity and balance in the midst of many projects; and protecting space and time for creativity, family, and community—represent important and neglected elements of whole health. We recognized that our training made us uniquely qualified to identify and understand the bigger patterns that made so many people say things like, “I could never do what you guys do.”

Whenever someone says something like this, we explain that everyone has different capacities and strengths. The particulars of our lives might not be appropriate or available to them, but the *qualities* that define them absolutely are. Here are some of the qualities that define a Well Life for the purposes of this book:

- An experience of ease—a state of mental and physical relaxation that is with us even when we’re working hard
- A sense of openness—a tendency to accept, rather than resist, what life brings us
- An experience of integrity—a quality of physical, emotional, and mental stability that cannot be easily disturbed by internal or external forces
- A periodic experience of challenge (intellectual, physical, creative, or otherwise)

- An inclination to expand—to be inspired, to create, to share, and to grow
- Healthy and fulfilling relationships
- An experience of spiritual connection, or of belonging to something bigger than oneself
- An income that provides for living expenses, savings, and leisure
- An experience of knowing and being guided by our life purpose
- Frequent experiences of play and enjoyment
- The ability to set goals, create plans, and achieve them
- An experience of opportunity—to help, to enhance, to bring peace and love into our surroundings, etc.

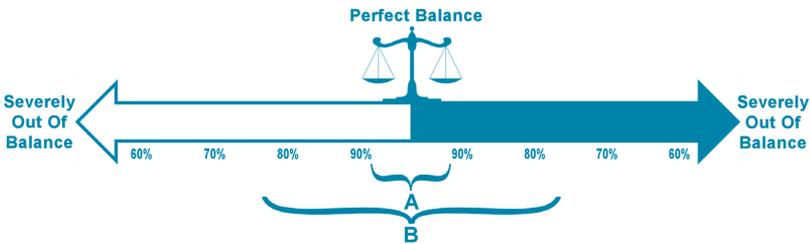
You can refine this list of qualities to fit your own lifestyle, but they represent the impressive scope of a Well Life.

True Balance Isn't Static

Fundamental to the medical systems we were trained in is the importance of *dynamic balance*—a range of relative equilibrium that shifts and changes throughout life. In TCM, this balance is usually expressed as the two-part harmony of *yin* and *yang*. And in Ayurveda, it's often expressed as the harmony of three qualities known as *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Both systems also utilize five-element theories of balance. These multipart concepts of balance reflect the interconnectedness of nature—a shift in one component causes a shift in the other components.

Because of the constant push and pull among the elements of an organic system, it's unrealistic to expect yourself to maintain a state of constant, perfect balance. However, the more conscious you become of how you're affected by diverse variables such as your thinking, your eating, and your climate, the more readily you can make adjustments in order to bring yourself back toward center. In this way, you can achieve a dynamic balance that works for you.

In the diagram that follows, the ‘B’ range indicates someone living within about 75 percent of their optimal balance. The ‘A’ range indicates someone living within about 90 percent of their optimal balance. A very healthy and resilient individual might feel okay with a range like ‘B’ or perhaps even wider, but most of us would much prefer a range of dynamic balance closer to ‘A.’ Your target dynamic balance should be the range within which you can readily self-correct for any deviation without degrading your function or experience.



Your dynamic balance range is an expression of all the things you do that compromise your balance, combined with everything you do to bring yourself back. Forty hours of sitting at a desk every week might push you toward a slow metabolism and sluggish circulation, but if this is offset with frequent exercise, the net experience may be close to optimal balance. Of course, mobility is just one of many metrics, and it’s not always easy to discern what you need more or less of in order to live closer to center—but that’s what you’ll learn in this book.

It’s important to note that the difference between living in the A

Balanced doesn’t mean boring or flat.

ment in your life or the emotional range you’re capable of experiencing. You could have an end-of-life skydiving-karaoke celebration with a dear friend who’s dying—an experience that includes

adventure, elation, and sadness—and stay within the *A range* the whole time. Balanced doesn’t mean boring or flat.

The further you stray from your optimum (like the *B range*, or wider) the less comfortable you’ll feel, the greater your risk of

experiencing crisis, and the harder it becomes to correct yourself. One reason it's difficult to correct is that the more severely the scale tips, the more dramatic your efforts to restore balance will tend to be, which may throw you out of balance in new ways. It's a lot like driving a car. If you fall asleep for a split second and notice that you've veered a few inches out of your lane, you can give the steering wheel a little tug and quickly get yourself back on track. But if you fall asleep a little longer and open your eyes to discover that you've drifted to the wrong side of the road and are speeding toward oncoming traffic, you're more likely to swing the wheel far in the opposite direction and risk careening off the shoulder. For this reason, it's best to catch yourself early. Though, even if it's too late for that, you should always begin with moderate, consistent corrections. It's never too late to begin.

Structure, Sweetness, and Space

We've drawn on the dynamic balance of the natural world to create the conceptual foundation we use in this book to guide you toward the attainment of your Well Life. Our system for a life of balance, peace, happiness and meaningful achievement is composed of three elements: *Structure*, *Sweetness*, and *Space*.

If you're committed to the Well Life, then the good-feeling, soul-nourishing, body-fortifying activities *can't wait* while you juggle your obligations and pursue your dreams. We developed this system so you can incorporate the tenets of a Well Life while still fulfilling your responsibilities. Here's what each of the three components entails.

Sweetness

Playing, being in nature, singing, stretching, exploring, cooking, eating, loving, connecting, creating, and enjoying all come under the general heading of *sweetness*. *Sweetness* not only makes life more satisfying, it also makes you stronger and better—more authentically *you*.

When we tell people, “Don't postpone the *sweetness*,” it's not because we think you shouldn't have to wait until retirement to enjoy

life (though you should also enjoy it then too, of course). Don't postpone the *sweetness*, because when you *feed* your life and soul with it, you become more effective at bringing your potential into the world and shaping this life however you choose.

Furthermore, if you fill your life with *sweetness*, you move many steps closer to the life of your dreams, regardless of the outcome of any particular goal. If your goals don't materialize when you think

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they will (or at all), at least you won't have spent years neglecting the sweet stuff. Just the opposite: you will have spent the time doing work that feels significant, treating yourself well, enjoying the world, and living the full spectrum

of this human experience. It doesn't get much better than that! And then, when you *do* achieve your dreams, if you've been feeding your soul and growing all the while, you'll be better able to assimilate the new changes in a healthy way.

Structure

As we've expanded our understanding of health to include the ability to successfully shape one's circumstances, achieve goals, and capably manage the responsibilities of a fully engaged human, we've noticed that *structure* is a challenge for most people. Every goal, from the smallest to the grandest, requires some form of *structure* to get from point A to point B. The same is true for the balanced operation of a life with many moving parts. Yet we've encountered many people who try to avoid *structure* altogether because they simply don't know how to incorporate it, and/or they believe it will restrict their freedom and creativity. Or they interpret the Law of Attraction to mean that everything is accomplished through thought, and therefore *structure* and work are needless or misguided.

Other clients willingly utilize *structure*, but not always in a way that would be most efficient or fulfilling. Perhaps the *structures* they have in place haven't been consciously updated since childhood.

They're doing things in the circuitous or cumbersome way they came up with decades ago. There may be mechanisms in place that serve agendas that haven't been applicable for years. They may have adopted elements of *structure* by imitating others, but without personalizing them.

When we've examined the *structures* people are using to try to create successful, happy, and meaningful lives, we've found that most folks lack a good education in life architecture. We've seen *structures* like a bridge made of clothesline suspended over a canyon—it seems to go from A to B, but lacks support. Making it across would depend on a massive amount of personal effort, focus, and luck. Other *structures* were more like a concrete pipe—sturdier to walk through, but at the expense of any enjoyment along the way. Still other *structures* were like complicated tangles of trusses, cables, and beams—more likely to get the traveler lost and confused than to their destination.

Structuring your life in a conscious way inevitably means recognizing and abandoning structural elements that are “not to code”—extraneous, unsound, impinging on other needs, or otherwise dysfunctional. A full life and a complicated life are very different things. Complicated structural habits can make a person feel overwhelmed when they only have two things to get done in a day. Likewise, operating from *structures* that secretly serve hidden desires or unhealthy beliefs can be like using an outdated navigation system. You may end up at a used tire stand on a dusty road, trading in one of your less-important organs for a soup can full of gasoline. We really don't want to see that happen. Everyone knows the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but we're not suggesting that the only good *structure* is one that never meanders. There are rarely any straight lines in life, because there's lots to learn and experience along the way. A good *structure* is one that's forged consciously, incorporates *sweetness* and *space*, and steers you in the direction of your dreams.

You've heard many times that happiness is a journey, not a destination. The same is true for life architecture. Sure, we want you to get to point B. But why take the boring sidewalk there when you could dance across lily pads or ride in a hot air balloon with a pink unicorn on it?

Why not find a way to get there that involves doing something *beautiful* with the resources you're given? Why not take a path that enables you to *use your gifts*? Why not choose a vehicle that's *aligned with your life purpose*? Why not find a way to get there that helps and inspires others along the way? That's what healthy *structure* will do for you.

Space

The key to creating healthy and functional *structure* is to integrate it with *sweetness* and *space*. *Space* is where we connect to Spirit. *Space* is where we really see ourselves. In *space* we can come to understand our darkness and our light, and we can learn the depths of our potential.

Space is where we listen—not to our thoughts or our media, but to the stillness within us where truth lives.

Space gives us the capacity to receive and expand. We need *space* to reflect, adjust, and grow. Alignment and healing can't occur without it. *Space* is where we listen—not to our thoughts or our media, but to the stillness within us where truth

lives. Insight and creativity only enter our consciousness through the opening that *space* provides. *Space* is the crucible in which *sweetness* and *structure* interact to yield a life that feels inspired, meaningful, and fun.

Sweetness needs *space* in order to be rooted in authenticity and to penetrate, engage, and feed the deepest parts of you. *Structure* needs *space* for perspective; it doesn't breathe without *space*. Moreover, you need *space* to really understand where you want your *structures* to take you. In turn, within the earthly realm, *sweetness* gives *space* a language, and *structure* provides vessels for *space* to enter the everyday world.

Many traditions have a term like *space* to describe the “emptiness” from which everything is born:

- In Daoism, it's called *Wuji*, the limitless, boundless, or, most literally, the nonpolar. In this sense, it's where our expanded consciousness resides, which isn't polarized, doesn't need to take positions, and is simply open.

- In Buddhism, it's *Sunya*—emptiness, openness, or spaciousness—the *space* in which the soul is unconfined by the mind.
- In Ayurveda, it's *Akasha*—*space* or ether—the origin and essence of the entire material world.
- In the elemental system of ancient Japan, it's called *Ku*—void, sky, or heaven—representing creative energy, power, and spontaneity.

Besides the expansion and clarity that *space* facilitates in us, there's another great reason to make it a priority: it's the antithesis of the perpetual mental engagement that dominates our lives more than ever. All the time we spend plugged into the massive flow of media, data, and communications, we're disconnected from the magic of the moment and the natural world around us. Inviting *space* into our lives reminds us who we are.

A Few Words on Digesting These Concepts

Certain in-vogue concepts can sometimes make our “bullshit meter” go off, and this makes us hesitant to share them. They may be perfectly valid ideas, but their popularity seems to dilute their value. As a principle becomes widely recognizable, it's common for people to believe that their *intellectual* understanding of it is the same as an *experiential* understanding. “Oh yeah,” we think dismissively, “I know about that.”

In an age when profound spiritual truths from traditions around the world are easy to come by on Facebook, this shallowness is an insidious trend. Besides the missed opportunities caused by our believing we understand the impact that embodying a concept would have on us simply because we know what the words mean, there's a related belief that contributes to stunted personal growth: that valuable concepts should *produce* change in us, or that, in order for a teaching to be valid, it should be *revelatory*. This rarely happens, of course. Occasionally, a person who is completely ripe for an idea and totally open to it will happen upon the idea and it goes deep. Just through the encounter, they have a life-changing “aha!” moment.

Don't wait for *aha!* moments. It's best to treat them as a fantasy. The information in this—and any—book is highly unlikely to *cause* the change you desire. We often secretly hope this is how it works, and when it doesn't we discredit the information and/or its bearer. Usually, the bearer should be let off the hook, because any smart teacher knows that this isn't usually how learning occurs. Making new information work for you is a process of assimilating it, applying it to your own situation, and consistently using it. It's like building any skill. In the same way that reading about pitching a baseball isn't going to cause you to become a great pitcher, reading about psychological health isn't going to automagically produce psychological health.

In applying the concepts we present for promoting change, it's important to remember that you're up against *habits* of behavior and thinking. It's likely that you've thought the same negative thoughts thousands of times. Breaking habits is challenging. Therefore, whatever approach you take to replacing them with new ones, you *must practice consistently*. Practice doesn't happen while you're reading a book. So, if you finish reading a personal-growth book and then go on to your next book without a period of focused practice, you can expect the book to have little positive impact on you. We repeat: Don't expect an encounter with a valuable idea to produce a revelation in you.

If you're like us, you probably don't actually need to find more, new, and better ideas—you just need to practice what you've already learned. You'd be much better off choosing a single book or teacher and spending a year or more working on the teachings they present before moving on to acquire more ideas.



In the chapters ahead, we'll show you many ways to cultivate *sweetness*, to build intelligent *structure*, and to open your *space*. We'll also point out many opportunities to notice and shape the *structure*, *sweetness*, and *space* already present in your life. By balancing these elements and utilizing the many tools and exercises we'll share, you'll be powerfully equipped to create the Well Life of your dreams.