



Sustainable Wellness

G. Giddings MD*

Sustainable Wellness: An Integrative Approach to Transform Your Mind, Body and Spirit

by Matt Mumber and Heather Reed
New Page Books – Paperback – CA\$15.99
ISBN: 9781601632340

One of the underlying themes of the book *Sustainable Wellness: An Integrative Approach to Transform Your Mind, Body and Spirit* by Matt Mumber MD and Heather Reed is that of “uncertainty.” That word is no stranger to anyone who has ever received a life-altering diagnosis. “Uncertainty” might also describe the intended target audience for this book. At first glance, a reasonable guess might be that it is aimed at cancer patients, cancer survivors, chronic disease sufferers, New Age practitioners, or family members and loved ones. Written in an unencumbered style, the book could easily appeal to all of these. However, some of its most important tenets might resonate most strongly with physicians themselves.

Mumber, an integrative radiation oncologist, and Reed, a yoga and meditation teacher, take the reader through a “healing journey” designed to be followed over a span of 8 weeks, either individually or in a group setting. The authors offer their definition of illness as “a state of imbalance that occurs when challenges come up and demand a response from our resources in order to regain balance,” which leads to a somewhat oversimplified view of illness as a dichotomy between balance and imbalance, as opposed to something approaching a continuum—possibly a more accurate reflection of individual perception. Mumber and Reed systematically guide the reader through 8 wellness steps, each of which ends with a review and a “yoga bit.” The authors take many of their cues from well-established experts, referencing, among others, Jon Kabat-Zinn (mindfulness) and Harvey Max Chochinov (dignity therapy), interwoven with first-person narratives (sometimes Zen-inspired) which lend a more accessible overtone.

The analogy of the 3-legged stool is a key concept of the book, used throughout to further the concept of health balance and imbalance, with the legs representing physical activity, stress management, and nutrition. The foundation of the stool is “awareness,” which is paralleled by the seat, “spirituality,” defined as that which “informs our thoughts and actions, and gives meaning to all aspects of life.” Simply put, in a fully integrated life, with broad awareness, the spiritual view is expanded, and an imbalance in one “leg” of life will put the others similarly off-balance.

Sustaining Wellness gives the reader tangible tools to put the 8 steps into action, including meditation and breathing techniques, tools for self-reflection (life review and planning), nutrition guidance, and physical exercises to increase strength and flexibility (nutrition and physical activity). The reader is encouraged to select a few of the tools to use in creating and maintaining a “life practice.” However, one other important utility of this book for physician readers may be its provision of tools to help restore the delicate balance between life and work—an imbalance in that can lead many, especially those in the fields of oncology and palliative medicine, down the path of burnout.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no affiliations, financial or otherwise, with any pharmaceutical, medical device, or communications company.

Correspondence to: Gordon Giddings, The Cancer Program, Windsor Regional Hospital, 2220 Kildare Road, Windsor, Ontario N8W 2X3.

E-mail: gordon_giddings@wrh.on.ca

* University of Western Ontario, London, ON.