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The Symbiosis of Creativity and Wellness: A Personal Journey

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Jennifer A. Quarrie

An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

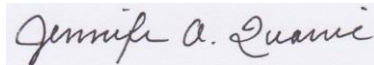
April 2015

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

The Symbiosis of Creativity and Wellness: A Personal Journey

The Symbiosis of Creativity and Wellness project explored how holistic personal wellness practices nurture creativity, and conversely, how creativity fosters personal wellness. The project specifically explored wellness from the standpoint of sleep and circadian rhythms, somaticism and movement, nutrition and hydration, meditation and mindfulness, as well as connection and support. By immersing in research-based wellness practices and building a customized approach to personal wellness, this project not only facilitated measurable personal wellness improvements over the six-week period, but also highlighted more profound insights within the relationship between creativity and wellness. Overall this work resulted in significant lifestyle changes, a more holistic and balanced approach to priorities and time management, and insights towards personal, familial and vocational goals. The experience deepened personal skills in creative thinking, Creative Problem Solving, affective thinking, intuition and mindfulness, as well as forged additional steps on a path towards self-actualization and transformational leadership.

Keywords: creativity, wellness, wellbeing, creative thinking, creative problem solving, self-actualization, sleep, circadian rhythms, somatic, movement, nutrition, hydration, meditation, mindfulness, connection, support, symbiosis



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05/03/2015

Date

Buffalo State
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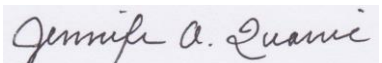
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DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Within us is a secret longing to remember the light, to step out of time in this dancing world. It's where we began and where we return. - Jack Kornfield

This project and all of my Masters work is humbly dedicated with deepest gratitude to my loving and supportive family. Thank you for your endless encouragement, patience and sacrifice. It has been your company along the way that made this experience so rich.

- ☞ To my darling baby girl, Ashley – You have walked every day of this journey by my side, thank you for your unconditional love, blooming mind and boundless energy. You inspire me to be the best person I could ever be and to love like the ocean.
- ☞ To my golden-hearted husband, Euge – Thank you for your strength and flexibility on this journey. Your spirit for adventure and change is unparalleled. Thank you for paving this future together.
- ☞ To my lovely mother, Marilyn – Thank you for holding us up in every way. Your time, thoughtfulness, love and devotion bring our family alive. You steep the family in wellness and we wish to give the same to you.
- ☞ To my supportive father, Walt – Thank you for your quiet support and punny humor. You are a living example of physical wellness and I strive to share that path.
- ☞ To my joyful sister, Carolyn – Thank you for your gentle openness and loving care. Many years ago you taught me the joy of the present moment, it's with me every day.
- ☞ To my sweet brother, Jason – Thank you for demonstrating such a beautifully non-judgmental and accepting way of living. It inspires us to watch you striving for your dreams – we are with you.
- ☞ To my inspiring aunt, Janine – Thank you for always believing in me, supporting my dreams in so many ways, and teaching me early in life to take crazy breaks!
- ☞ To my discerning stepson Jack – May you find joy in all that you do. As you blossom and embrace your gifts, may you find richness in connecting with others, love in family and lightness in the weight of the world.
- ☞ To the Quarries – Thank you for such positive and loving support for our family.
- ☞ To Grammy – Thank you for your encouragement smiles and love.
- ☞ To Grandma – Your Masters inspires me - thank you for paving the way.

To all of the ICSC Creative Studies faculty and staff, thank you for your amazing ability to give knowledge from your heart in such a compelling way, share your lives' work and challenge us to move past our perceived boundaries. It has been a joy to work with each of you. Most especially, thank you to Dr. Cyndi Burnett, who has been a listening ear, supporting hand and guiding light from before day one. Her humor and intuitive ability to connect made her a powerful advisor and a wonderful friend. To Doug Reid, thank you for teaching, living and listening so empathically, and for such kind and supportive friendship and collaboration on our listening work. Finally, to my incomparable cohort and tribe, the Wizards of Osborn, thank you for creating this unparalleled experience, going amazing places together and helping to build a glittering future.

Insight and humor * Connection and growth abounds * Creativity

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SECTION ONE: PROJECT BACKGROUND

Purpose

When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot become manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied. – Herophilus

The purpose of the Symbiosis of Creativity and Wellness project is to explore the relationship between wellness and creativity in order to more clearly identify how holistic personal wellness practices nurture creativity, and conversely, how creativity can foster personal wellness. By contributing potential insights to both fields this project may also encourage habitual creativity and wellness practices in readership and provide social institutions with additional reasons to prioritize these elements in our daily lives.

Through the power of media, insight blogs of key take-aways may prompt attention and discussion on these topics, as well as help facilitate win-win solutions between those seeking enhanced personal wellness and those seeking increased creativity from others. More personally, the project predominantly aimed to further my own private journey towards understanding and achieving wellness through practice, exploration, play and experiential study. In addition to enhancing personal health, creating a more balanced and holistic life, and developing additional courage to protect personal needs, this project also enriched my professional creative contributions to both creativity and wellness fields and helped solidify my career trajectory in the direction of my passions.

Background

What Does Creativity Look Like?

What does creativity look like? When we look at a creative person or a creative product what do we really see? We all have different personal impressions of creativity,

but chances are that many members of the world population ascribe to creative stereotypes: artistic, erratic, disruptive, anti-social, weird, or even ill. We've heard lore and watched movies of raving, mad creative geniuses. While a few folks may fit that bill, creativity, true creativity, is beautiful. It is open and intensely aware. It is alive and teeming with energy, motivation and connection. It is inspired and unafraid to see big possibilities. It is imbued with hope and rooted in reality. It is connected through acceptance, partnership and respect. When the world sees creativity, I wish they might see these elements. I hope they understand that creativity harnesses possibility in a way that empowers people to change their own lives for the better. Next time that you look at a creative person or product, I hope you will see the courage, care, energy and hard work it took them to harness their inner person and to share this beauty with the world.

Creativity and Illness Overplayed

From modern medical research to mega media, creativity gets an inordinate amount of attention from the standpoint of mental illness. Amazon offers dozens of books with the words *creativity* and *madness/illness/depression* in their titles, but none containing *creativity* and *wellness*. There are annual conferences dedicated to creativity and madness (Panter, 2015) and box office hits, such as *Amadeus*, highlighting the odd behaviors of eminent creatives. "The romantic notion that mental illness and creativity are linked is so prominent in the public consciousness that it is rarely challenged" (Kaufman, 2013).

In 2009, Judith Schlesinger debunked some of the over-hype by carefully evaluating the original studies by Kay Redfield Jamison, Nancy Andreasen, and Arnold Ludwig that have been most frequently cited as showing a link between mental illness

and creativity, and criticized their validity based on their “small, highly specialized samples with weak and inconsistent methodologies and a strong dependence on subjective and anecdotal accounts” (Kaufman, 2013). Since that time, a 40-year study of approximately 1.2 million Swedish people, found that individuals with scientific or artistic occupations were not more likely to suffer from psychiatric disorders and concluded that mental illness did not increase the probability of entering a creative profession (Kyaga et al., 2013). The one exception noted was that those with bi-polar disorder who were 8% more likely to be in a creative profession (Kyaga et al., 2013). Separately, Harvard psychologist Albert Rothenberg (1990) spent decades and over 2,000 hours interviewing creative people and used his data to refute the link between mental illness and eminent creativity by stating,

First, contrary to popular as well as professional belief, there is no specific personality type associated with outstanding creativity. Creative people are not necessarily childish or erratic in human relationships, as is often thought, nor are they necessarily extraordinarily egotistic or rebellious or eccentric. (p. 8)

Rothenberg (1999) also went farther to note that only one characteristic was omnipresent for all creative people he interviewed: motivation.

Only one characteristic of personality and orientation to life and work is absolutely, *across the board*, present in *all* creative people: motivation . . . they want *specifically* to create and to be creative, not merely to be successful or effective or competent. (pp. 8–9)

This consistent trait of motivation across creative individuals aligns well with the thinking skills model of Creative Problem Solving (CPS) and the premise that one

requires motivation, ownership and interest to successfully solve a challenge (Puccio, Mance, Switalski, & Reali, 2012; Miller, Vehar, Firestien, Thurber, Nielsen, 2011; Treffinger, Isaksen, & Firestien, 1983).

The Road to Recovery

One key approach to balancing out the creativity literature on illness is to pursue research towards creativity and wellness. Currently, the majority of research available addresses the relationship of wellness to general cognition and affection, primary skill sets in creativity. Further deciphering the role of wellness specific to creativity will compliment cognitive research as well as the growing wellness literature.

Schlesinger's (2009) intent in shedding light on those original studies was important for the exploration of creativity and wellness. She reminded the world at large that although some mentally ill people may be creative, people do not require mental illness to be creative. She also included a call to action when she noted, "many of their claims have had unfortunate implications for the perception of creativity and the credibility of psychological research in general" (p. 1), encouraging researchers to explore the nuance of that connection more responsibly as well as move onward to identify other important elements of creativity. Schlesinger (2009) summarized her piece by discussing "the signs of a hopeful trend to celebrate, rather than pathologize, people with exceptional gifts" (p. 1) – the true essence of the diversity, acceptance and hope that inherently characterize creativity.

Creativity as healing. One budding theory that may warrant additional research is the possibility that those suffering with mental illness may naturally turn to creativity in an effort to heal (Quarrie, 2014). Neuroscience research shows that when the brain is

producing alpha waves, it is usually in a state of alert relaxation; this state has multiple concurrent effects on the body, to include both promoting creativity and assisting the body to self-heal (Carson, 2011; Fink & Benedek, 2012; Foxe & Snyder, 2011; Sternberg, 2009).

Alpha wave healing. A body of medical research indicates that the alpha wave brain state of alert relaxation combats stress and its destructive physiological implications, thus creating an optimal state for physical healing (Sternberg, 2009).

Healing is, in essence, a journey toward wellness. As a result, wellness practices that promote healing may also promote creativity. One example of this are studies that show alpha wave activity and focus increase during meditation (Davidson et al, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1994); while meditation increases wellness it is also a common form of incubation in problem solving and creativity.

Wellness and creativity. This overlap of relaxation, rejuvenation and creativity is not surprising. Great ideas seem to arrive in the shower or out on a walk far more frequently than in contentious office meetings. After a few days at the beach escaping the grind and deliberately thinking about other topics, sometimes a flood of new ideas for standing work issues will come out of the clear blue. Even high power CEOs and government officials retreat to relaxing locations when crunching on tough problems or facilitating fragile discussions. Just as humans go to less-stimulating and less-demanding settings to heal when ill, the same habit benefits creativity. To be clear, creativity also demands new stimuli, interaction and diverse perspectives, so time with others is critical; thus ensuring there is a balance of both is ideal.

Could those who are mentally ill and drawn heavily to creative pursuits in effect be

self-medicating by inviting the alpha wave brain state through creative activity, therein lowering cortisol levels and achieving the calm, mental clarity and flow that may be otherwise difficult to achieve? Exploring creativity's links with wellness may help counter long held biases of an exclusive relationship between mental illness and exceptional creativity.

Future Avenues. Exploring and accepting creativity for what it is, rather than researching solely within established theoretical rivers, opens up the field to developing through river jumping in directions more applicable to daily life. By moving forward and building on research in the realm of wellness with positive psychology such as self-actualization and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a; Kashdan & Ciarrochi, 2013; Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961; Runco, 1999), self-care such as healing through creative activity and including nature in physical environments (Quarrie, 2014; Robin, 2010; Rogers, 2000; Sternberg, 2009), the theory of mini-c creativity and the everyday creativity movement (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Richards, 2010; Burnett, Cabra, & Barrett, 2015), and possibility (Goswami, 2014), the field of creativity may more clearly demonstrate the role of creativity for all people and help to re-characterize current popular misconceptions particularly related to wellness.

Creativity and Wellness as Paths toward Self-Actualization

Exploring our own creativity is an exceptionally personal journey that dives deep beyond the surface of mere thinking skills, into lesser-known areas of the self that many people tend to ignore in their everyday lives. It is in these deeper realms, where affect blends with cognition and beliefs form behaviors, we begin to learn about our core. Who are we as people? How have we formed our stories from our experiences? What is at the

root of our motivations? What is our personal potential and how might we realize it?

As part of a journey in self-understanding one may re-identify with personal needs, beginning with those elements of life that are so basic they are easily taken for granted. Breathing, eating, sleeping. Modern demands can distract individuals from filling their own basic needs despite thriving in much more complicated cognitive pursuits; overlooking basic nutrition, fresh air, sunlight and physical activity. Addressing these needs is part of wellness and provides a foundation for self-actualization.

Self-actualization. From a psychological perspective, one of the highest purposes a person can pursue is self-actualizing – fulfilling one’s potential and becoming the best version of one’s self possible (Rogers, 1961). This humanistic perspective asserts that one can be at her best and reach her full potential when her environmental conditions are right. People have the best chance of reaching their purpose or attaining their goals, wishes and desires in life when optimizing all conditions. Both creativity and wellness are ways to optimize conditions. However, doing so is not merely about the self; for when we are our best selves, we are capable of caring for others and contributing to the world far better than before. This concept may seem contradictory to those focused on the needs of others, but it highlights the idea that we are less likely to meet our goals of helping others if we are not functioning well. Airline passengers receive this reminder each flight, “put on your own oxygen mask before helping those around you.”

Applied Creativity Skills

Creative Problem Solving (CPS). CPS was used to initially identify this project as a deep personal interest and common thread through previous work in the Master’s program. Additionally, CPS assisted to highlight the five primary project segments to

pursue: sleep/circadian rhythms, somatics/movement, nutrition/hydration, meditation/mindfulness and connection/support. This project followed the general CPS process by first gathering key data, assessing and clarifying each topical area, ideating on ways to approach each topical area, developing ways to best integrate these wellness approaches into my life in a seamless and adoptable way, and implementing these wellness habits in a way that ensures permanency and thriving. The CPS process also helped foster experiential learning and the development of holistic resultant products that reflected the findings the best way possible.

Mindset. Most importantly, the overall mentality required for creativity and CPS guided me through this experience. It was important to maintain constant awareness of cognitive and affective elements of each topic. Further, applying the guidelines for divergent thinking assisted in deferring judgment of myself and unfamiliar methods; accepting novel wellness methods and striving for novel solutions to very common wellness struggles to reach new solutions; building on wellness ideas with creativity concepts and other knowledge to customize solutions to work best personally; and striving for quantity in experience to maximize the understanding, analysis and potential benefit of the wellness approaches. Likewise, applying the guidelines for convergent thinking assisted in remaining affirmative in mentality, approach and self-address; being deliberate in decisions, actions and habits; building on solutions to adapt them to work as well as possible; remaining oriented to the original vision and goals throughout the process to maintain perspective and stay on track.

Meta-affective skills. Additionally, the meta-affective skills of the CPS Thinking Skills Model, mindfulness, dreaming, sensing gaps, playfulness, avoiding premature

closure, sensitivity to environment and tolerance for risks, were key guides throughout the process as well (Puccio et al., 2011, p.73). One in particular, mindfulness, is a primary topic this project explored. Other creativity skills such as tolerating ambiguity, visualizing, incubating, and forcing connections assisted me in navigating uncertain periods, understanding next steps and discovering connections between creativity and wellness. Overall, creativity skills helped me to keep an open mind and create the most benefit possible from the work.

Rationale for Selection

Lifelong Interest in Health

From a young age medicine appealed to me. There was amazing, unknown wisdom in the body. There is something profound about being able to help people in their moments of greatest need. To help them keep what is most valuable to them – their lives and their time with those they love. I pursued this vocation early and by the age of 16 was enrolled in an intensive summer program where they gave future physicians unprecedented access to the life and work of medical professionals. Like third year medical students we did rotations between departments, morning rounds, emergency room shifts and even scrubbed into surgery. For a young girl it was a dream come true to live this possible future. I met incredible people along the way who inspired me and stayed in touch for years afterward, but overall I left disillusioned. The business of medicine boiled down to a sour reality: spend your time as a glorified drug dealer or expert mechanic. Forego spending time with your family to race through long days, cut short time with patients and skip past much of the tenderness associated with care. The mindset of western medicine drove me away.

Instead, during college I furthered my interest in health and humanity by studying cognition and brain function, all the while keeping close to the human side with a minor in biomedical ethics and volunteering at the hospital. There I saw the altruism. The quiet souls who made the difference in whether someone chose to continue living over suicide. The emergency room guardians who gave injured children the chance to live a full life. The hospice personnel who helped frightened friends face their fear of impending death. This humanistic side of care is rich. It is more than chemicals and sterilized tools. It is about the whole person. It centers on respect and compassion and acceptance and empathy.

By learning about, experiencing and integrating wellness practices into my personal expertise, it encompassed my love of health science in a way I have longed to do the majority of my life. By combining wellness with my knowledge of cognitive science, neuroscience and creativity, it helped me make a leap forward in mind/body health that may also assist others.

Paths to Self

Yoga. Personally, I found my way towards wellness through my family as a young child. My parents encouraged and were exemplars of fitness, healthful eating, intellectual curiosity and exploration. We lived a very active, happy and balanced life. As a working adult many of those habits slipped away after long work hours, extensive travel and other responsibilities. In the midst of one particular long, stressful workweek I attended a yoga class on a lark when Pilates had been canceled. I never went back to Pilates again. There in the humble room a few warm-hearted souls put away their business suits for an hour and bathed in compassion, respect and acceptance. We felt like

ourselves there. Not only that, the mentality that yoga taught helped us navigate the most difficult moments of our lives; to be present and accept and experience discomfort for what it is rather than resisting. I practiced for the better part of a decade and began a teacher certification. It was one of the most healing overall experiences of my life and I aimed to bring it forward once again.

Creative studies. Years later when I joined the Creative Studies program I traveled a similar journey. Beginning the first weeks in business attire taking copious notes, when the rest of the class was comfortably casual, I listed wellness as a primary challenge. I not only sought to recover from the sleep deprivation of jet lag, motherhood and shift work, but also to re-center my life on my own priorities rather than the pulls of competing external demands. I had proven I could answer the bell to such an extent that I was in danger of leaving my own corner for good. After practicing CPS and applying its mentality throughout my life over the span of the program, I pursued wellness and left my difficult work schedule. Just like yoga, I moved toward accepting who I was and recognizing my other needs. By the next summer in the Creative Studies program I had come a long way and on the final day I came to class in yoga pants as part of presenting my goals within the space of creativity and wellness.

Motherhood. The experience of becoming a mother magnified the need for a more humanistic approach to life, not only for myself but also for society at large. While I knew that self-abusive behaviors and an imbalanced work life negatively impacted those I cared about most, it was never so apparent as when every bite of food and wink of sleep helped to determine the developmental trajectory of another life. Pregnancy was a wonderful experience and brought me to a very centered place away from the whims of

the world. It gave me an extremely direct reason to care for myself, understand my own needs and create a life of wellness. Socially, it gave me an excuse to take care of myself in situations when I would have otherwise been expected to sacrifice my health. It was a drastic juxtaposition compared to my prior lifestyle of sleep deprivation and overwork and I realized that it should not have been. Going forward, caring for a newborn I understood that no one would prioritize my or my child's needs more effectively than I would, and I had a responsibility to do so in order to give my daughter the best that life had to offer. Looking forward I decided not to be a cautionary tale but rather a walking example. Yet that was easier said than done juggling an infant, family, home, work, and a Master's program. I made progress and experienced set-backs, all the while learning and trying to improve.

United priorities. Through this project I sought to combine the power of three of the most transformative experiences of my life: motherhood, creativity and yoga. By using these as my foundation, I took a fresh look at wellness in my own life and explored how I might best achieve it. While my personal experience with wellness was limited, I believed in holistic interdisciplinary approaches and deeply believed that one could not fully pursue one part of wellness without pursuing the others. I was eager to try new wellness practices such as meditation, as well as return to a dedicated yoga practice, this time with the additional creativity vantage point. These were not just things I wanted to try, but who I wanted to be. Learning a mentality of self-acceptance in the face of a brutally judgmental world would be one of the greatest gifts I could give others, especially my children. It was in essence a return home on the way to the future.

Transformative leadership

I undertook my journey to wellness also in part because I knew it would help others who shared a similar struggle. I believed it is possible to apply this creative mentality in the field of wellness and that it would help more people achieve it. I was eager to explore what parallels existed between the two fields that could nurture each other. By sharing the core insights that came from this project in a clear way I hope to motivate others to increase their own compassion and decrease their judgment towards themselves, learn the mentalities of creativity and wellness, and apply them in their own lives in a way that helps them feel fulfilled and self-actualized. This not only gives to them as individuals, but to society as a whole as they become stronger people, contribute their strengths, and share the value of wellness with others. As a result, I resolved to serve as a wayfinder on this personal wellness creativity journey so that others can more easily follow their own paths to wellness, creativity and self-actualization in the future.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Introduction

This project required a diverse literature review spanning creativity literature, cognition and affection research, as well as general wellness literature. In order to pursue specific links between creativity and the five core concentrations of sleep/circadian rhythms, somatic/movement, nutrition/hydration, meditation/mindfulness and connection/support, additional genre-specific resources were leveraged to explore each topic. Finally, additional ‘linking’ literature assisted in relating concepts across fields for a more interdisciplinary and holistic understanding and outcome.

Wellness & Creativity

Both creativity and wellness are two relatively young fields in terms of modern academics; however, their study and value is as old as humanity itself. Fields such as these are hard to contain given their breadth. Even at the most basic level there is contention amongst experts over the definitions of creativity and wellness.

Wellness

Many mainstream sources defined wellness as nearly synonymous with health. Merriam-Webster (2014) defined wellness as “the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal,” and the World Health Organization (2015) used wellness to define health as, “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Yet wellness centers that specialize in the field provided more nuances. The National Wellness Institute (2015) defined wellness as, “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.” Beyond that, the National Wellness Institute collaborated with other health and wellness leaders and have generally agreed that, “wellness is a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential; wellness is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment; wellness is positive and affirming.” The University of California Davis (UC Davis) (2015) emphasized the fact that wellness is a change process when it stated that, “wellness is more than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth” (p. 1).

Dimensions of wellness. Classic wellness resources differentiated wellness into mind, body and spirit. More modern institutions expanded the set. The National Wellness Institute (2015) created a six dimensional holistic model including:

emotional, occupational, physical, spiritual, intellectual and social wellness.

- *Emotional* - Self-esteem, self-control, and determination as a sense of direction
- *Physical* - The benefits of regular physical activity, healthy eating habits, strength and vitality as well as personal responsibility, self-care and when to seek medical attention
- *Spiritual* - The development of belief systems, values, and creating a world-view
- *Social* - How a person contributes to their environment and community, and how to build better living spaces and social networks
- *Occupational* - The enrichment of life through work, and its interconnectedness to living and playing
- *Intellectual* - Creative and stimulating mental activities, and sharing your gifts with others

This model not only emphasized the six different elements of wellness, but also the interconnected nature of the dimensions to form a holistic model (see Appendix C). UC Davis delineated seven dimensions of wellness by adding environmental wellness to the six in the National Wellness Institute's model. This project references the full seven-dimension model of emotional, occupational, physical, spiritual, intellectual, social and environmental wellness.

Creativity

In its simplest form creativity is the generation of something that is both novel and valuable, a definition that builds on Stein's (1953) widely accepted definition of creativity as novel and useful. The various viewpoints of creativity are best described by

Rhodes' (1961) four P's model, which showed creativity as a combination of people, products and processes all within the influence of press (i.e. environment). Models of applied creativity, such as Creative Problem Solving (CPS), emphasize creativity as a deliberate change process. The thinking skills model of CPS highlighted the specific cognitive and affective skills involved in creativity (Puccio, et al., 2010). By integrating the influences of humanistic and positive psychology, such as the work of scholars Maslow, Rogers and Csikszentmihalyi, creativity experts paired metacognition with affective skills to identify meta-affective skills (Puccio, et al., 2010). Researchers identified meta-affective skills for each of the six stages of CPS, to include mindfulness, a common element with wellness (Puccio, et al., 2010). Recent emphasis on emotional intelligence as a critical life skill, particularly for success in leadership and other socially oriented positions, has increased public valuation of affective skills, which were once discussed little beyond the realm of psychology. In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (2006) shared a model for emotional intelligence that emphasized some of the same skills critical to creativity and wellness: self-awareness, self-confidence, acceptance, compassion, self-control, adaptability, initiative, conflict management and building bonds. Creativity is a pervasive change mechanism across all levels of needs and becomes a more powerful tool when including meta-affective skills and used holistically.

Creativity & Wellness: Common Mentalities

The foundational mindset for creativity is nearly identical for wellness – accepting what is, deferring judgment to find novel, personalized solutions, showing respect and compassion for different perspectives and ideas, altruistically seeking win-win solutions

rather than zero-sum results, responding to surprises yet leading change to prevent unnecessary loss, and recognizing the power of a single person to change the course of lives. These, incidentally, are touted as top leadership attributes as well.

Creativity and wellness are both holistic models; they address the full person, challenge, system or set of variables as an interconnected multi-variable set. Changes in one area will influence other areas. A useful model to consider when contemplating the relationship between wellness and creativity is self-actualization, another holistic model, which centers on the entire individual and how they respond to their environment.

Hierarchy of needs. During CPS, many of the greatest challenges people seek to solve come back to very simple and basic human needs. Many have attempted to solve work or other external challenges only to realize that the true challenge they needed to solve was within the realm of personal wellness. Maslow (1943) described these needs in a hierarchy ranging from physiological necessities like food and shelter up to self-actualization where you are functioning as the most ideal form of yourself. Whether people realize it or not, solving these foundational problems frequently equates to re-achieving wellness.

When Maslow created his renowned Hierarchy of Needs, he used a pyramid to show how needs interrelate and demonstrated that to become a self-actualized, full functioning person, one must attend to all needs rather than a select set (Maslow, 1943) (Appendix A). Creativity and wellness are both similar. When using CPS, one must address the full picture to take into account all pathways and hurdles, and thus ensure a solution is successfully achieved. Likewise, in wellness, all areas of wellness must be cared for or the individual may fail to thrive. An athlete who eats well, hydrates, has

healthy social outlets, and meaningful intellectual and occupational pursuits will lose the ability to maintain all of those life elements without also ensuring she gets adequate sleep. These holistic models emphasize that while it may be more complicated or difficult to address all areas of wellness concurrently, or solve a complex problem creatively, by taking a big picture approach one is better able to maintain focus on the ultimate vision and goals, and keep a more open mindset that looks just as much at each part of creativity or wellness as at the interrelationships between the parts.

Parallel to Chakras. This viewpoint also has some remarkable parallels to chakras, energy centers of the body in eastern philosophy, which are commonly utilized in wellness approaches (Appendix A). However, Maslow's hierarchy insinuates one must attain all levels of needs before reaching self-actualization at the top, which includes creativity and problem solving. In contrast, chakra theory shows that it is one concurrent, rather than hierarchical, system. Holistic wellness models share this second unified approach (Appendix B).

Alderfer's (1969) frustration/regression principle stated that if a higher level need remains unfulfilled, a person might regress to lower level needs that appear easier to satisfy. In creativity this is sometimes apparent when people work to solve the wrong problem. In wellness this shows when people treat symptoms rather than an ailment or root cause. It is easier to take medicine when your body falls sick rather than alter your personal eating and sleeping schedules to avoid repetitive illness; however, over the long term the individual fails to stay well and may suffer more serious damage to health and longevity. As a result, a critical element of both creativity and wellness is mindfulness and the ability to recognize and accept truth.

Sleep & Circadian Rhythms

Valuing and Prioritizing Sleep

Modern society offers a full plate of options on which to spend time. In fact, modern conveniences, while making our lives more efficient in some ways, also add to our responsibility set. The more we take on, the more we must fit into the same 24-hour day. Societal pressure by our organizations, communities, friends, and families expect immediacy and responsiveness no matter the request or the hour, placing many in an 'on-call' 24/7 status. When schedules overflow or others leverage last minute demands, where do we find the time? While many prioritize activities and drop what can be dropped, a common place to find time is reducing sleep. Frequently sleep reduction is an exception; however, as exceptions mount sleep deprivation can become the rule merely to complete the day's necessities. Over time, this consistent loss and its effects become cumulative and such sleep debt can exact great costs when critical details are missed (Robin, 2010, p. 9-10).

Living in a state of sleep deprivation or sleep disruption impacts every aspect of life. By becoming aware of and giving credence to the critical roll of sleep in wellness and the toll sleep deprivation takes on cognitive, mental and physical health, we are better able to prioritize sleep as a necessary part of each day. Sleep has many important known functions for the body and mind, and many that are yet to be understood.

Biological necessity. Without sleep individuals fail to function very quickly. The effect is so extreme that a debate currently rages over whether sleep deprivation should be considered torture. Animal studies of prolonged (weeks) of sleep deprivation have resulted in death (Bulkeley, 2014). Conversely, people who sleep an average of eight

hours per night have the lowest mortality rates (i.e. highest longevity) (Robin, 2010, p. 5).

Repair. Sleep is far more than just downtime, “on a cellular level, the body is literally repairing and restoring itself” (Peri, 2015, p. 1) particularly providing cells both oxygen and glucose (Maxon, 2013). During sleep, the body clears “substance S” from the blood, an unknown substance believed by researchers to be adenosine, a byproduct of energy production that cells release into the blood throughout waking hours (Maxon, 2013). The only known way to clean the blood of ‘substance S’ is sleep and without sleep the blood becomes clogged with it (Maxon, 2013). Regular, restful sleep is crucial for the body's function and repair. “During sleep the immune system performs a host of vital regenerative functions that are absolutely necessary for a healthy mind and body in waking life” (Bulkeley, 2014, p. 1), thus without sleep the immune system can become significantly compromised.

The body's ability to recover and recuperate from the damage done during the daytime on a cellular level is affected by [sleep deprivation] ... if our sleep schedule is erratic or irregular, that synchrony of repair that's supposed to happen at nighttime doesn't get played out the way it's supposed to" (Kam, 2015, p. 1).

Immune function. Sleep deprivation is directly linked to increased risks for heart disease, obesity, diabetes and depression (Robin, 2010, p. 6). Sleep helps regulate glucose, cortisol and insulin, which drive our energy and stress responses. Deep sleep increases the body's melatonin levels, increasing protection from viruses and cancer, as well as human growth hormone, a key factor to weight management and energy levels (Robin, 2010, p. 8).

Symptoms of sleep deprivation. The symptoms of sleep deprivation begin with

unpleasant feelings of fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating, followed by problems with reading and speaking clearly, poor judgment, lower body temperature, and a considerable increase in appetite. Continued deprivation results in disorientation, visual misperceptions, apathy, severe lethargy, and social withdrawal (Bulkeley, 2014). In a study of prisoners,

Short sleep duration (6 h or less) and poor sleep quality were related to higher levels of aggressiveness in aggression-provoking social situations and more physical health complaints. In addition, poor sleep quality was related to higher levels of rumination and more symptoms of ADHD” (Vogler et al, 2014, p. 167).

Sleep deprived individuals were also found to have higher levels of three inflammatory markers, fibrinogen (blood clotting protein), interleukin-6 (pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokine), and C-reactive protein (CRP levels in the blood rise in response to inflammation) (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 13).

Concentration, thinking & learning. Sleep promotes clear thinking, facilitates the ability to focus attention and helps solidify learning. Not only does sleep deprivation slow down thinking, lower alertness and reduce concentration, but it also prevents logical reasoning and complex thought (Peri, 2015). Lack of sleep also changes perception and personal motivation (Robin, 2010, p.5). As a result of these changes to thinking, judgment and decision-making can also be negatively impacted when individuals fail to accurately assess situations or choose the best behaviors for their intentions or the situation (Peri, 2015).

Memory. Excessive sleepiness also impairs memory in three primary ways: 1) nerve connections that make our memories are strengthened during sleep and that growth

is prohibited by wakefulness, 2) learning is embedded into long term memory during sleep and that transfer does not occur as fully without sleep, 3) waking sleepiness prevents focus and thus reduces what is stored in short-term memory and eventual long-term memory (Peri, 2015). Further, the different phases of sleep have different functions and as a result, reducing sleep time or disrupting any phase short prevents completion of those needs (Peri, 2015). During REM sleep the body discards select sets of memories, thus freeing space for new memories and information (Robin, 2010, p.5). In addition, Harvard memory researchers noted that sleep not only helped organize memories but that “when you awaken, memory tasks can be performed more quickly and with less stress and anxiety,” (Jacobs, 2006, p. A2) thus highlighting the secondary implication that sleep helps reduce stress responses that cloud mental processing.

Problem solving. Using sleep to assist in problem solving is an age-old approach that comes with its own maxim: “Let me sleep on it.” While we recognize anecdotally that sleep assists in identifying novel solutions to problems, neuroscience is only beginning to understand how. One study of 54 American college students (aged 18-23 years) entailed a brief chance to learn a gambling game and return to play it again 12 hours later; however, one group learned in the morning and stayed awake to play it 12 hours later and the other group learned it at night and slept before playing it 12 hours later. “Eighty percent of those who slept figured out the trick to beat the game, while 40 percent of those who stayed awake did” (PlusNEWS, 2011).

Breathing. Respiration is a critical autonomic function that allows sustained mental processing throughout the night. Like rapid eye movements (REM), respiration control differs dramatically across sleep stages (Pagliardini, Funk, & Dickson, 2013). While

researchers are still identifying methods through which they can more accurately study sleep, they currently employ different types of anesthesia to mimic different sleep stages for study. Generally sleep stages progress through a 90-minute cycle from wakefulness to light non-REM to non-REM sleep back to lighter non-REM stages then into REM sleep and repeat for another cycle (Pagliardini, Funk, & Dickson, 2013). While the purposes of the different stages remain unknown, they do vary in each individual and can be impacted by variables such as nutrition and drugs, physiology, age, altitude, and medical conditions (Pagliardini, Funk, & Dickson, 2013). Patients who suffered from sleep apnea and were treated with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) showed a decrease in NREM sleep, an increase in REM sleep and more stable brain wave patterns (Zhang, et al., 2015). Given that REM sleep is considered a time of pivotal mental processing, and improved breathing increases REM stage duration, one might conclude that healthful breathing is critical to both sleep and cognitive processing during sleep.

Rejuvenation. Restoring energy reserves and mental clarity is one of the greatest benefits of sleep. While people gain greater benefits from sleep than wakeful rest, including down time in the day is healthful can also provide benefits (Robin, 2010, p. 10). Activities like meditation, yoga, walking outside or laughing with friends can be restorative and restful, particularly when done in a mindful way (Robin, 2010, p. 11).

Circadian Rhythms

The science of chronobiology offers insight into our biological rhythms and how we connect to our ecological environment. Daily rhythms, known as circadian rhythms, are omnipresent and influence everything from sleep/wake cycles and gene expression to body temperature and behavior (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015). Molecular mechanisms

generate circadian rhythms and key off of photoreceptors to synchronize our cycles with our environment. Individual circadian rhythms vary in regard to sleep duration and sleep timing and thus have different chronotypes (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015).

Social jetlag. Data shows that people sleep very differently on work or school days when the social demand to wake disrupts natural sleep cycles. Across the population, free day sleep cycles (internally derived sleep time) vary so much from work day sleep cycles (externally derived sleep time) that when graphed it appears as though the individual changed time zones for the weekend; as a result, the phenomenon is called social jetlag (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015). Only about 13% of the population does not suffer from social jetlag (Roenneberg, Allebrandt, Morrow & Vetter, 2012). As a result of social jetlag, many people chronically lose sleep, accumulating sleep debt and chronically slowing concentration and hampering of bodily systems (Maxon, 2013).

Humans can adapt their internal clock to their environment depending on the strength of their response to stimulus. The light factor that influences personal rhythm is called the zeitgeber. One study of teenagers camping in Colorado showed that while they arrived with vastly varying biological clocks, after a week of camping in bright daylight and dark nights, all of them had synchronized their internal clocks to the sun clock – circadian consonance (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015). As a result of modern indoor work environments, during the day modern man is exposed to 1,000 times less light than his ancestors and the reverse is true for night as he is exposed to 50 times more light than his ancestors who had complete darkness (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015). These conditions create weak zeitgebers.

Consequences of circadian dissonance. Living in a world with three different

clocks - the sun clock, the social clock and the biological circadian clock – is difficult and prone to conflict amongst them (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015). Living against biological circadian rhythm is called circadian dissonance. There are emotional, cognitive and somatic consequences to living out of synch with our personal body clock. Emotional consequences include exhaustion, increased irritability, mood fluctuations, anxiety, depressed mood, frustration, anger, increased impulsivity, decreased motor skills, increased stimulant use, increased sedative use and alcohol use/misuse (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015; Pritchett, et al., 2012). Cognitive consequences include reduced concentration, performance, attention, memory, recall of events, multitasking, decision making, creativity, productivity, socialization, and communication (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015; Pritchett, et al., 2012). Somatic consequences include drowsiness, microsleeps, unintended sleep, sensations of pain, sensations of cold, cardiovascular disease, risk of cancer, metabolic abnormalities, weight gain, risk of type II diabetes, reduced immunity and disorders of the HPA (Morrow & Roenneberg, 2015; Pritchett, et al., 2012). Circadian dissonance can also cause internal desynchronization where sleep, meal and other cycles are out of synch.

Recovery from social jetlag and associated sleep deprivation. It appears that while negative effects compound, if individuals extend sleep volume to meet their normal needs and sleep as closely as possible to their natural chronotype, the body can recover (Robin, 2010, p. 10). When we operate in synch with our personal circadian rhythm, to include regular exercise and nutrition as well as sleep, our body thrives (Kalsbeek, Morrow, Roenneberg, & Foster, 2012). Moving meal times earlier in the day, which helps synchronize rhythms, assists in losing weight despite the same number of calories

consumed (Merrow & Roenneberg, 2015). One of the biggest changes required is one of mindset; viewing sleep as an investment rather than an expense.

Sleep Hygiene

The term sleep hygiene refers to the current recommended set of healthful sleep behaviors (Rosenberg, 2014). Sleep specialists tend to separate sleep hygiene into the categories of sleep environment, sleep behaviors, and waking behaviors.

Sleep environment.

- Use a good mattress and pillows for body support and alignment (Robin, 2010, p. 6) and 100% cotton sheets (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a); use the bed for sleep only rather than watching TV, working on a laptop, etc. (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a)
- Remove all technology from the bedroom altogether (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a)
- Remove the clock from view to remove its light and the temptation to clock watch when awake (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a); looking at a clock also prompts behaviors that create wakeful brainwaves to include the calculation of time and anxiety over sleep or lack thereof (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 22)
- Ensure the space is well ventilated with clean air and no dust
- Make the room as dark as possible (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a); use blackout curtains or eyeshades to assist if needed (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 21)
- Ensure the room is as quiet as possible or use 'white noise' to drown out disruptive sounds (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a)
- Make the room a relaxing space by decluttering, organizing, painting the walls a

calming color and putting up artwork that brings happiness and relaxation
(Rosenberg, 2014, p. 23)

- Set the room to be reasonably cool (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a; Rosenberg, 2014, p. 21)

Sleep behaviors.

- Establish your intention and motivation for sleep (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 19)
- Wear comfortable, non-restrictive bed clothes (American Sleep Medicine, 2015a)
- Ask your family to limit disruptions during your sleep hours (Kam, 2015)
- Sleep on your back or on your side (with a pillow between the knees) to ensure level hips, relaxed shoulders and relaxed hands; sleep posture is key to somatic health (Robin, 2010, p. 6)
- Establish and stick to a regular sleep-wake schedule (Kam, 2015)
- Create a sleep preparation ritual that begins 30-60 minutes before bedtime, possible to include a bath or reading, but avoiding screen time; fall asleep once you feel sleepy (American Sleep Medicine, 2015b)
- Avoid blue light at night to include television, phones, computers and other electronic devices; also avoid white low-energy fluorescent and LED light; the specific cells in the eyes that are sensitive to blue light also regulate your sense of night and day and the seasons and they associate blue light with daylight; signals from the blue light shut down the hypothalamus, which shuts down the production of melatonin (one of the primary sleep hormones) (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 24)

- Avoid eating within two hours of bed time, spicy foods, caffeine late in the day, nicotine, or alcohol within 4-6 hours of bedtime (American Sleep Medicine, 2015b)
- Schedule exercise late in the day, preferably at the same time everyday, but at least four hours prior to bedtime (American Sleep Medicine, 2015b)
- Use relaxation exercises before going to sleep to include deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation (American Sleep Medicine, 2015b; Rosenberg, 2014, p. 28-30)
- Avoid sleeping with pets to minimize disruptions (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 22)
- Sleep for 7-9 hours of sleep each night (Robin, 2010, p. 8)

Waking behaviors.

- Expose yourself to bright light at the beginning of your day and keep your workplace brightly lighted to promote alertness (Kam, 2015); ideally expose your body to sunlight within two hours of waking (Rosenberg, 2014, p. 25)
- Limit caffeine, particular within hours of bedtime (Kam, 2015)

Sleep and Creativity

Required for creativity. Overall, sleep is a critical part of creative function. By enhancing the ability to focus and concentrate, which are critical to every stage of CPS, but especially during convergent thinking (Puccio et al, 2011, p. 102), sleep increases the chance that thinkers will successfully clarify the right problems to solve, ideate well beyond comfort zones and deep into novel thought territory, develop solutions in thorough and efficient ways and retain enough motivation and energy to implement the solution through completion. Further, sleep supports complex thought patterns by

maintaining alertness, clearing the brain of toxins, clearing storage and processing space in the brain through memory assimilation, and promoting neuronal growth and communication which helps form new associations in the brain.

Altered perception through sleep deprivation. While personal accounts of extreme sleep deprivation include nonlinear thought and even hallucinations, which could possibly feed novel and creative thinking; the fact that memory and retention are so poor during this advanced stage may render these thoughts useless if not recorded. Sleep deprivation also has a close relationship with depression; while some studies assess sleep deprivation may make people more susceptible to depression (Robin, 2010, p. 6), others show that a key symptom of depression can be the inability to sleep. Research has not yet determined whether depression and psychiatric deviation are a consequence or a cause of circadian and sleep deprivation (Merrow & Roenneberg, 2015). Mood and sleep use the same neurotransmitters and as a result it can be difficult to discern whether an individual has sleep loss or depression (Maxon, 2013). Recently theorists have wondered if depression, given its widespread incidence across cultures, may be an evolutionary adaptation that promotes the ability to focus and thus produce creative products more effectively; however, studies link the gene for depression to advantages in immune system defense (Gabriel, 2012).

Loss through sleep deprivation. “Sleep deprivation most certainly leads to reduced brain efficiency in terms of memory, learning, creativity and problem solving as well as increased accidents and errors” (Robin, 2010, p. 5). In essence, sleep deprivation reduces our abilities at every level of Bloom’s Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating (Anderson,

Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001, p. 6). Further, reduced sleep tends to mean reduce motivation and commitment to continued work, “because creativity itself has been shown to rely heavily on motivation and perseverance, both of which are lessened with sleep deprivation, it follows that to be your most creative you need consistent, good sleep” (Robin, 2010, p.5).

Somatic & Movement

The Body Electric

The body is many things to many people. A home. A machine. A prison. A mystery. A reflection. A gateway. A miracle. Despite living every moment of our lives with them, we have limited knowledge of the body, and what we know evolves daily. Western thought teaches that all thinking, cognition and understanding reside in the mind and the brain, and yet the brain is part of the body and is connected to every corner of it. Other philosophies celebrate the wisdom of the body. It is a gateway through which human life comes forward. It is the mechanism through which we experience life. “The body is the field, the place, where it all goes down. We feel anger, fear, desire, loss, madness, and boredom on the field of our bodies, our emotions” (Gates & Kenison, 2002, p. 307). Those who understand this view of the body tend to treat it differently.

Awareness of the body and understanding its signals allow insight to flow through it.

Somatic knowledge. Our bodies themselves have knowledge. Physical memory comes through when dancers forget to cognitively remember their steps. We walk, balance, type and play without conscious thought about the mechanics of doing so. Upon dropping an object our foot has moved before we are conscious enough to consider directing such an action. Bodies also have more fundamental knowledge on how to build

and repair itself, how to process inputs and how to alert the conscious mind when things are amiss. The knowledge of the body is not fully known yet some mindsets and practices are far more respectful of it than others. Yogic philosophy, eastern medicine and even theories on intelligence include the body. Further study of the body may enhance our personal abilities.

Body leading mind. Research has discovered some fascinating things about the mind/body relationship in recent years. One study showed that the simple act of forcing the face into a smile began to release hormones that then brought on feelings of happiness (Cuddy, 2012; Gutman, 2011). Further, studies on posture showed that physically standing tall and placing the hands on the hips like a superhero prompted the decrease of stress hormones like cortisol and increased confidence (Cuddy, 2012). These experiments show that by placing the body in particular physical positions it can not only prompt chemical reactions within our bodies that lead to a more positive mindset but it also impact self-perception. Physical posture and movement can not only lead to physical, emotional and social wellness, but it may also potentially prompt a state more supportive of creativity. The act of hunching, to include over a computer, can therefore provoke a feeling of disempowerment, lower confidence, decreased motivation and range of other responses that can potentially inhibit creativity.

Touch. The act of touching skin has a profound effect on the body, so much so that parents are encouraged to hold newborns against them ensuring skin-to-skin contact to facilitate release of key growth hormones and the decrease of stress hormones (Montagu, 1986). Physical touch is also reported to decrease the experience of pain (Chillot, 2013). In certain forms, touch can also foster a sense of psychological support and safety

(Chillot, 2013). A study of professional basketball players showed that the more on-court touching there was early in the season, the more successful the teams and individual players were by the end of the season (Chillot, 2013).

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. In his theory of multiple intelligences, Howard Gardner included bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, the skilled use of the body, as a core type of intelligence (Gardner, 1983, p. 217). It includes the ability to develop bodily skills, yield the body in different ways, non-verbal communication, bodily expression, performing, athleticism, and fine motor control (Gardner, 1983, pp. 217-248). Gardner (1983) noted that,

The body is more than simply another machine, indistinguishable from the artificial objects of the world. It is also the vessel of the individual's sense of self, his most personal feelings and aspirations, as well as that entity to which others respond in a special way because of their uniquely human qualities. (p. 249)

This form of intelligence also reveals surprising insights. For example, drawing a thought or feeling typically captures information that was not otherwise expressed verbally. Gestures, postures, expressions and other forms of non-verbal communication form 80 percent of a given message. The body conveys far more than most people consciously give it credit for, which is an incredibly important insight to remain aware of.

However, what Gardner does not delve into is the idea that the process of knowing the body to such an extent lends insight into other things. Learning to read the body is an intuitive sort of language and discovering the paths to know the body can be applied elsewhere, such as in reading other people, relating to one's environment, understanding animals, and connecting to the universal consciousness.

Intuition. Sometimes our bodies seem to sense things that our conscious minds have not. Some might call this a gut feeling or intuition. While there are varied definitions of intuition across literature, one holistic view describes intuition as existing across physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. Physical intuition is the phenomenon of strong somatic responses to circumstances that show no evidence for cause (Vaughn, 1979, p. 66). Intuition plays a big role in many wellness decisions, particularly in deciding which practices to develop into habits. Further, intuition is a critical decision-making skill within creativity that can and should be employed deliberately to make more educated and personally authentic choices (Francisco & Burnett, 2008).

Movement

While it is so automatic we may not think about it, movement is fundamental to who we are as humans. Our bodies have evolved for constant movement. We came from nomad ancestors who were consistently moving throughout both their daily routines and in a larger migratory sense. Just as we must eat consistently throughout the day to maintain energy and health, so must we move continuously.

Benefits of movement. The physical act of movement helps all bodily functions, keeps tissues limber and cleansed, reduces stress, counters aging, and provides sensory. Movement also prompts the release of endorphins; neurochemicals that help people feel good (Robin, 2010, p. 50). By breathing and sweating during movement the body naturally disposes of toxins (Robin, 2010, p. 48). Movement also creates physical space within the body for organs to function and nerves to grow (Robin, 2010, p. 49).

Sedentary stagnation. Just like bodies of water, if we keep moving and flowing

we are fresh and renewed, yet if we are still, we become stagnant and a breeding ground for disease. Current recommendations for physical activity 30 minutes a day barely scratch the surface for what we need, particularly if the remainder of the day is sedentary (Rath, 2013). With deliberate efforts to move more often, we can move from one side of Newton's first law of motion, *objects at rest tend to stay at rest*, to the other, *objects in motion tend to stay in motion*.

Types of Movement

Yoga. To categorize yoga under just 'movement' is a disservice. Yoga is a balanced blend of physical, mental and spiritual practices. It is meant to harness the wisdom of the body and educate in a non-cognitive way. Yoga starts out very physical as it looks like stretching but as one struggles with discomfort during simplistic poses it engages the mental muscle. Through this struggle is where the spiritual and intuitive side of the practice emerges.

Opening. While each yogi sets her own intention for practicing, yoga is generally very opening. It opens energy channels in the body, opens blood vessels to enable circulation, opens joints that were locked or stiff, and most importantly opens mental boundaries. Mental blocks that people set up for themselves become obvious through yoga and they must quietly confront them. Yoga's emphasis on compassion also marks an opening of the heart to be more gentle and accepting of the self and others, as well as an opening of the mind to a deliberately affirmative mindset that considers broader possibilities rather than conferring judgment. Further, yoga provides opening in the form of release; bringing some yogis inexplicably to tears as pent up emotion comes flooding forward.

Dichotomies. Yoga provides a space to explore opposition. Each pose has both flexion and stretch. Yogis root into the ground to connect to the earth yet reach skyward to pull in the opposing direction. Yogis twist in order to align. Yogis develop incredible personal control yet emphasize letting go. Yoga is quiet yet expressive and joyful. Yoga encourages looking into ones self to better clarify the outer world.

Health. Yoga has been linked with numerable health benefits to include easing arthritis, reducing spinal deterioration, reducing hypertension, prompting release of an antidepressant neurotransmitter, promoting cardiovascular health, increasing enzyme production, improving mood, reducing stress and even activating the right side of the brain and promoting creativity (Broad, 2012). In 2010, studies concluded that yoga equals or surpasses exercise in reducing stress, improving balance, diminishing fatigue, decreasing anxiety, lifting moods, and improving sleep (Broad, 2012).

Breathing. During normal breathing people use only a fraction of their lung capacity, usually averaging around 30 percent (Robin, 2010, p. 54). Deliberate deep slow breathing, whether during meditation, yoga, tai chi or other practices, helps to cleanse, energize and heal the body by creating an alkaline state, decreasing heart rate, filling the body and cells with oxygen, and flushing out toxins (Robin, 2010, p. 54; Ross, 2003, p. 115). Yogic breathing, pranayama, unites the body with the mind and uses concentration to help improve “the ability to accrue, store, regulate, and use the energy we receive from the air we breathe” (Gates & Kenison, 2002, p. 299). All types of physical activity require specific breathing to support them – a swimmer breathes differently than a singer, but breath is critical for both. What those who practice mindful breathing discover is that the physical capacity for breath is far larger than originally thought. Further, separating

inhale from exhale with a pause allows the breath to be processed physically, clarifies the physical control in breathing process and ensures a slower, calmer pace of breathing. As noted by Richard C. Miller, Ph.D., “the breath, like thought, is discontinuous. It comes and goes. By focusing on the pause between the breaths, you open to an awareness of stillness, which lies behind and between each breath and each thought” (Gates & Kenison, 2002, p. 303).

Somatic, Movement and Creativity

The body provides a gateway through which creative ideas transform and enter into the world. Moving out of the realm of the cognitive empowers an individual to expand the types of intelligence brought to bear in creative endeavors, to include intuition, presence, and secondary senses. This connection with the body allows an individual to build greater self-trust, which is critical when identifying wishes, goals and visions of the future. In addition, by adopting the mindset of letting go of ‘supposed to’ and ‘perfection,’ it opens mental boundaries that may have previously restricted growth and creativity. Further, by tuning into the body, it enables more energy to go towards unconscious process and incubating, which often plays a critical role in creative insight. By developing a mentality of compassion, it places the individual in the realm of the affirmative where there is less judgment of ideas and thus more successful ideation and striving for novelty. Much like CPS, most athletics, particularly yoga, begin with an intention for the workout or session; this serves as a compass for the practitioner when struggles arise.

Nutrition & Hydration

Nutrition and Cognition

Science is actively working to understand the varied effects of nutrition on cognition, affection, attention and other mental processes that impact creativity. The body is a sensitive machine and can experience drastic functional variations from minute changes in body chemicals to include hormones and nutrients.

The brain consumes an immense amount of energy relative to the rest of the body.

Thus, the mechanisms that are involved in the transfer of energy from foods to neurons are likely to be fundamental to the control of brain function. (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008, p. 5)

Food influences how neurons behave and grow, and in turn neurons influence overall metabolism. Any disturbances in that energy homeostasis are often linked to disease (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008).

Recent nutrition research has helped shift general perception of food from merely providing energy and proteins to build the body to a means to prevent and protect against diseases (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008). Nutrition and hydration are foundational to brain health and impact the way neurons function, how neurons grow and communicate, the way neurons resist insults, and which hormones the brain and gut (some of which can enter the brain) produce (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008).

Further, neuroscience has moved to the point of calling the gut (stomach, large intestine and small intestine) the “second brain” given its plethora of neurons and complex nervous system. The second brain is responsible for digestion, produces its own neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, and sends nerve signals to the brain that affect mood (Young, 2012). The body’s state of wellness also has a direct affect on

the second brain. Times of stress stimulate the release of neurochemicals and hormones, which in turn impact the gut's ability to perform its normal duties such as digest food and absorb nutrients (Young, 2012). Several gut hormones or peptides, such as leptin, ghrelin, glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP1) and insulin have also been found to influence emotions and cognitive processes (Gomez-Pinilla, 2008).

Overall, eating nutrient-dense food, staying well hydrated and avoiding toxins, fosters physical and mental wellness. A patient of nutritionist Dr. Fuhrman used a nutrient-dense, plant-based diet to address chronic debilitating headaches that doctors failed to treat with medication or other methods and found that it also relieved her depression and other physical problems, “The wonderful thing is, when you fix the whole body, everything gets taken care of simultaneously” (Fuhrman, 2013). While we only have moderate control over the external environments in which we place ourselves, we have far much more control over the environment we choose to create internally.

By evolving our knowledge on nutrition and using consumer power to demand the elements of diet we need and want, we may help to influence the health of our societies. The Standard American Diet (SAD) is considered one of the least healthful in the world since its trend toward high sugar, salt and fat additives. Nutrition impacts society was well captured by French gastronome Anthelme Brillat-Savarin when he said, “the destiny of nations depends upon the manner in which they feed themselves” (Honore, 2004, p.57).

Overarching Nutrition Themes

Several overarching themes emerged across the divergent literature to unify the genre. Not surprisingly, many referenced back to other elements of wellness.

Mindfulness in nutrition. The goal of most nutrition literature is to build awareness not only around what we consume, but also how we consume it and its impact on our wellbeing. Health coaches encourage asking the right questions such as, “Does the food I am eating truly nourish me? Is it what I (as a unique human being) need?” (Arloski, 2014, p. 217). Eating for satiety rather than fullness and eating communally are top mindful eating approaches (Miller, 2008, p. 27). Yet mindfulness goes beyond that to include how society treats food, how people act when eating and even how certain foods alter our own behavior. The Slow Food movement, for example, “advocates for fresh, local, seasonal produce; recipes handed down through the generations; sustainable farming; artisanal production; leisurely dining with family and friends” as well as eco-gastronomy, the concept of eating in a way that protects the environment (Honore, 2004, p. 59). Further, mindfulness about where our food comes from and how it was raised is important as well. The concept of *chi*, energy and life force, is also noteworthy when it comes to nutrition. You are what you eat and thus eating foods that are alive and preferably raw have a greater energy level as well as far more enzymes, which enable the absorption of vitamins and proteins (Ross, 2003, p. 97).

Reframing food as medicine. One of the most prevalent mentalities nutritionists espouse goes back to the ancient Greek philosopher Hippocrates who is quoted as saying, “Let food be your medicine” (Ross, 2003, p. 89). Reframing food in our lives begins with awareness of the current western view of nutrition, to include the fact that many of the foods promoted by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) food pyramids (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015), food lobbyists and advertising are nutrient deficient.

Aim for high nutrient density. The ultimate goal of eating is to maximize health, energy and our ability to thrive. Dr. Joel Fuhrman (2013) advocated for a Nutritarian diet to maximize the intake of nutrients, anti-oxidants and phytochemicals. This approach encouraged the consumption of high nutrient per calorie density in order to promote longevity, relieve food addictions, and normalize appetite. Fuhrman noted that processed foods and animal products (meat and dairy) composed the majority of the SAD. The Harvard School of Public Health advocated for its own Healthy Eating Pyramid (Harvard School of Public Health, 2015) and while significantly different from the USDA's recommendations, it does not go as far as Nutritarian recommendations.

Fresh is best. Minimizing time from farm to table increases the number of nutrients one will consume. In fact, flash frozen vegetables are frequently more nutrient rich than older unfrozen produce for this reason. Fresh foods have the enzymes need to digest them built into the food, thus fully enabling the body to digest the food and frees the pancreas to create metabolic enzymes rather than be overburdened trying to make digestive enzymes as well (Ross, 2003, p. 97). "Approximately 85 percent of all vitamins and 100 percent of the enzymes are lost in the cooking process if the temperature goes above 118 degrees Fahrenheit" (Ross, 2003, p. 97). As a result, consuming these enzymes via fresh, raw food allows the body to have a stronger metabolism, more energy and faster healing ability. Humans happen to be the only animals who cook their food and experiments that fed cooked food to primates prompted them to develop a variety of human diseases such as coughs, colds, pneumonia, autoimmune disorders, arthritis, psoriasis and even cancer (Ross, 2003, p. 99). If foods are cooked, steaming and slow

cooking at low temperatures are preferable as UCLA studies on charred/blackened food show that it is carcinogenic and should be avoided (Ross, 2003, p. 98).

Bolster your immune system. One of the most important ways to maintain a strong immune system is to keep an alkaline body pH. The body is born in an alkaline state and what we consume turns it more acidic. Deep slow breathing and eating fresh fruits and vegetables are the most effective ways to increase and maintain alkalinity (Ross, 2003, p. 115). Fuhrman uses the acronym “G-BOMBS” to stand for “greens, beans, onions, mushrooms, berries, seeds” to protect and bolster the immune system through prohibiting fat storage on the body, preventing cancer, prolonging lifespan (Fuhrman, 2013).

Lagom. The Swedish use the term, *lagom*, which means “just the right amount,” to express the importance of moderation. This concept pervades Swedish society in everything they do and promotes balance with individuals and across social resources. For all living things, too little of something can be as harmful as too much. Nutrition and medication particularly rely on amounts, dosages, and portion sizes to ensure no harm can come to the recipient.

Calorie restriction. Right now the SAD includes far too many calories for healthful living and has contributed to several modern epidemics to include obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Reducing food quantity requires increasing food quality by eating nutrient-dense food.

Calorie restriction is the only known way to extend the life span and enhance health in all species. As reported by the American Journal of Physiology and the Journal of Gerontology, among many others, by reducing their normal calorie

intake by half, animals have lived twice as long as their normal projected life spans, with less disease and more effective immune systems than their peers (Ross, 2003, p.118).

Every publication I reviewed, from Sloan-Kettering to general wellness literature listed calorie restriction as imperative to disease prevention. Medicine called it calorie restriction (Ross, 2003, p.118), Anderson (1995) called it The Law of Nutritional Frugality (p.46), Miller (2008) called it eating for satiation rather than fullness (p. 27); and all of them promote a mindful approach to how your body feels when eating and consciously stopping once nourished. As Diogenes is quoted as saying, “As houses well stored with provisions are likely to be full of mice, so the bodies who eat too much are full of diseases” (Ross, 2003, p.117).

Fasting. The idea of fasting can feel uncomfortable. It harkens images of starvation and discomfort. Yet cultures across the world have included fasting as an important social ritual aimed mainly at purification and attaining higher states of consciousness. It turns out they are spot on. Whether they knew it or not, periodic fasting, in an educated way under the supervision of a health care professional, actually aids nutrition. To modern minds nutrition is exclusively about consumption rather than a balance or ebb and flow of nutrients. However, “when you fast, your digestive process shuts down after about a day – sometimes sooner. The energy that would normally be directed toward digesting food and then dealing with assimilating and eliminated is redirected toward purifying your body” (Ross, 2003, p.121). Fasting changes the body physiologically and allows build ups of “pesticides, food additives, heavy metals in air

pollution (like lead), anesthetics, residue from pharmaceutical drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine” to leave the tissues (Ross, 2003, p.121).

Slowing down. In addition to the Slow Food movement, which originated in Italy in direct response to the installation of a McDonalds near an iconic landmark, various cultures across the world, from Cameron to Crete, expect people to eat slowly as part of local custom (Honore, 2004, p. 59; Miller, 2008, p. 27). Eating slowly increases mastication, improves digestion, and sometimes reduces overall calorie intake because the body can sense fullness in closer pace with the meal (Miller, 2008, p. 27).

Eschew poisons and toxins.

Foods as drug conduits. While food components naturally have discrete effects on the body, food additives do as well, often with more harmful consequences. “More than three thousand chemicals can be legally added to food without being listed as ingredients anywhere on the packaging” (Ross, 2003, p. 121). Most processed foods contain additional ingredients to preserve or enhance them. Dairy and meats convey hormones and antibiotics, produce conveys pesticides and growth chemicals, and drinks convey addictive substances like sugar and caffeine. Concepts like “food coma” speak to the immediate and severe impact that certain foods and chemicals have on our bodies. Hormones in processed foods promote cancer and aging (Fuhrman, 2013). Fruits and vegetables have tremendous benefits, but it is important to clean food of potentially harmful germs and bacteria before eating them. While they sell non-toxic soaps for produce, vinegar is even cleaner and more effective at disinfecting germs (Orey, 2000).

Avoid Sugar & Processed Foods. Sugar is one of the most addictive and pervasive elements of the SAD. It has drastic damaging effects on the body and mind.

Sugar blues. Sugar and other high glycemic foods impact the body quickly with an initial high followed by a “low hypoglycemic state that includes tense mood, disinterest, depression and over negative perception of the world” (Ross, 2003, p. 92). Despite this negative experience with sugar, stress in our daily lives raises cortisol levels, which in turn stimulates the release of neuropeptide Y, which increases sugar cravings (Ross, 2003, p. 93). After consuming sugar and experiencing the high and low, folks often crave more sugar to raise them from the low. After a while the body becomes less able to manage its own sugar levels and becomes insensitive to its own insulin.

Brain damage. Reaching a state of insulin insensitivity can cause the permanent loss of brain neurons (Ross, 2003, p. 93). Some medical specialists have estimated that the average person has lost millions of neurons, and with it memory power, from sugar fluctuations alone (Ross, 2003, p. 93).

High glycemic foods. High glycemic foods include things like sugar, white bread, white flour products, processed fruit juice, white or instant rice, donuts, cookies, all alcohol and even rice cakes. A diet high in them results in more disease than other health dangers. In comparing the health of the French to the Americans, while the French eat four times more butter, smoke far more cigarettes, eat twice the animal fat, and consume three times the cheese than Americans, they have much less heart disease, age-related illness and diseases of affluence because they consume one eighteenth the sugar (Ross, 2003, p. 93). Why were British sailors, aka ‘limeys,’ afflicted with scurvy far more than all the other malnourished folk on the high seas? The sugar in their rum leached the vitamin C from their bodies so drastically that they had to replace it by consuming limes (Dufty, 1975).

Alternatives. Overall it is advised to generally choose slow release foods that are nutrient rich and composed of mostly water, fiber or air (Miller, 2008, p. 63, 65). Select herbs also help control blood sugar to include “cinnamon, cloves, fenugreek seeds, parsley, garlic, cumin seeds, ginger, mustard leaves and seeds, curry leaves and coriander seeds” (Miller, 2008, p. 80). Knowing the glycemic index of foods and choosing those with low numbers is a great first step toward better health and sugar control. Going to the point of understanding their chemistry is even better; for example, pasta cooked al dente has a lower glycemic index than pasta that is over cooked and floppy (Miller, 2008, p. 63). Dipping white bread in vinegar, as happy Scandinavians do, cuts its glycemic index in half (Miller, 2008, p. 63).

Eliminate hydrogenated fats. Some of the most toxic ingredients in modern food, hydrogenated fats and partially hydrogenated fats are in approximately 75 percent of the SAD (Ross, 2003, p. 113). Generally, hydrogenated fats increase free radical damage to cell membranes, speeding up aging, causing inflammation, creating enzyme deficiency, eventually leading to cancer (Ross, 2003, p. 114).

Chemistry counts. Combining foods in the right amounts aids digestion and nutrient absorption. Understanding how foods interact and when your body gains the greatest benefit from them is therefore critical. Many indigenous diets developed specific food preparation techniques that seem inexplicable today; however, upon closer scrutiny many of these methods aid in increasing nutrition (Miller, 2008, p.26).

Mindset impacts nutrition. Simply put, your state of mind impacts your body, to include the way it processes and responds to food. A negative attitude can actually change the pH of your entire body to make it more acidic (Ross, 2003, p. 115), impact

cell structures within the food (Ross, 2003, p. 125) and change digestion. Additionally, mindset is critical to setting intentions. When it comes to nutrition, food is more than pleasurable tastes or satiating hunger; it is about fundamentally caring for the body. By setting this intention there is a greater chance one might make choices that align with that goal. Loving your food and deliberately putting positive emotions into it will help you to receive that energy back (Ross, 2003, p. 122).

Hydration. The human body is 60 to 78 percent water and the brain is up to 80 percent water by volume (Nichols, 2014, p. 158). For healthy brain and body function, it is critical to remain mindful of your body's level of hydration and consciously drink water throughout the day. Keeping fluid levels up flushes toxins out of your body, improves cellular function and reduces strain on organs. Water makes the immune system more efficient, prevents memory loss, reduces the risk of Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease (Robin, 2010, p. 144).

Dehydration.

Even mild dehydration can affect the brain structures responsible for attention, psychomotor and regulatory functions, as well as thought, memory, and perception, and has been shown to decrease reaction times in working memory, lower alertness and concentration, and increase fatigue and anxiety in adults. Even scarier, there is some evidence from studies done in rats that cognitive impairment due to dehydration may not be completely reversible due to cellular-level damage. (Nichols, 2014, p. 158)

Low levels of water in the body can also decrease flexibility and intestinal function, increase weight gain, reduce concentration and memory, increase mucus and histamine reactions, build waste in the lymphatic system, interfere with sex-hormone production, intensify menstrual symptoms, and promote wrinkling and aging (Robin, 2010; p. 144; Ross, 2003, p. 116). Chronic dehydration is epidemic for many reasons. These days we live and work in dry indoor environments, avoid replacing fluid we lose, eat foods high in salt, and frequently drink unhealthful beverages that act as diuretics. Habitually, thirst is also frequently mistaken for hunger (Ross, 2003, p. 115).

Effective water consumption. It is most effective to drink between meals as drinking water during meals dilutes digestive acids and can prevent full digestion and absorption of nutrients. Unfortunately, not all water is the same; most drinking water contains more than seven hundred chemicals that do not boil away (Ross, 2003, p. 116). Ideally, water should be filtered with a high quality filter to remove chlorine and other additives, and should also be “wet”, with a “lower surface tension and less viscosity making it easier for the body to absorb” (Ross, 2003, p. 116). Room temperature water is best as cold water contracts the esophagus and the stomach making it more difficult to absorb (Robin, 2010, p. 142).

Nutrition and Creativity

Next to sleep, nutrition is the most foundational element to cognitive function and therefore creativity. Proper nutrition and hydration are much more than simply keeping the mind and body working well; they are also pivotal to expanding and sharpening cognitive abilities and ensuring energy levels are present for the degree of mental work creativity demands. The body is our link to perception and experience and if dulled or ill,

creative function and output can be compromised. Creativity requires concentration, memory, lower stress levels, calm moods, and affirmative mindsets – all results of good nutrition and hydration.

Both nutrition and creativity begin with a clear intention to guide the process and decision-making along the way. Without it, the train will almost certainly go off the track. Further, nutrition and creativity both originate from a place of compassion that values and respects the self, emphasize quality over quantity and benefits most from mindful approaches.

Parallels. Nutrition also parallels the process of CPS in a way: the individual determines what is best to eat (gathering key data and identifying the problem), the body deconstructs food (challenge deconstruction and clarification), the body takes the nutrient building blocks and combines them in new ways to create new elements for the body (ideation, combining and synthesizing), the new nutrients and elements work together with the rest of the body (developing and exploring acceptance) and the body uses up the nutrients as building blocks and energy (implementation). Nutrition is the physical form of creativity in that it is continually taking in new input and reforming it into what fills important needs.

Just like nutrition, creativity is only as good as the inputs you start with. The taste of the creative product is only as good as the way you combine ingredients. The way you feel after consuming the creative product is a direct result of specific ingredient selection, preparation and delivery. Whether you endeavor to create again relies very much on the experience and success of the first attempts. Like slow food, creativity requires time and

space to think, even if it is just a few hours. Like fasting, creativity requires periods of incubation away from active cognitive rumination.

Toolset. The knowledge humanity has developed about nutrition is a toolset, much like creative thinking tools. Once one has the insight into the process and tools, one never sees things the same way again. While both nutrition and creative thinking are not easy, particularly in the context of a society addicted to fast food and blink decision-making, the more involved processes are well worth the outcomes.

Sharing nutrition. While one cannot control what team members eat before coming in, leaders and facilitators can choose to provide refreshments that will help rather than hinder creative function. While candy looks bright and colorful and fun, it will make it that much harder for people to contribute and take valuable lessons away from the experience.

Meditation & Mindfulness

Meditation

“The word “meditation” is derived from the Latin *meditari*, which means ‘to engage in contemplation or reflection.’ The word meditation comes from the same Greek and Latin root as the word medicine” (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010, p. 440). Mindfulness meditation is known to have contradictory elements even within its very definition; while it is focused, it is broadly aware. During meditation while it may feel as though you are watching or observing, you are still every actively mentally engaged to hold that state. Another term for the practice of mindfulness meditation is *vipassana*, which means, “to see things as they really are” (Kornfield, 2004, p. 3). The purpose of mindfulness meditation is to train mentally and physically to be present, as well as to develop a

greater understanding of the self and what limits us (Kornfield, 2004, p. 4). Meditation combines sensations in the body with mental images and clear intention. The power of the mind to influence the body becomes apparent through meditation and with practice it can be honed and used.

Physiologically, meditation decreases heart rate, blood pressure and hypertension and helps manage pain (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010, p. 441; 445). In the brain, meditation is shown to increase alpha wave activity, which is associated with a relaxed mental state and increased creativity (Davidson, et al., 2003). Studies by Shwartz in the 1970s showed that meditation increased perception but lowered emotional activity (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010, p. 442).

Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness increases awareness of both the internal and external. It facilitates behaviors such as taking the perspective of others, controlling behavior, accepting experiences for what they are, using cognitive skills, and understanding one's functional values and beliefs about the world (Ciarrochi, Kashdan & Harris, 2013, p.7-15). Mindfulness also promotes presence and authentic engagement in the moment (Hayes, Kashdan & Ciarrochi (eds.), 2013, p. 316).

Meditation, Mindfulness and Creativity

Like creativity, meditation has no one agreed upon definition. Researchers looking at it from different angles define it within the context of their own fields and research rather than ascribing to a common definition. Researchers have recognized and studied the relationship between meditation and creativity for decades. Meditation has been found to promote divergent thinking as well as improve mood and manage stress

(Colzato, Ozturk, & Hommel, 2012, p. 5). More recently, integrative body-mind training meditation was also shown to increase divergent thinking and mood (Ding, Tang, Tang & Posner, 2014, p. 7).

Connection & Support

As a child I adored helping other people. In kindergarten I would stop in the midst of completing my own work to teach others how to do theirs and would do so for so many children I would fail to complete my work. Early in life I learned to guard against this tendency to ensure it did not prevent me from personally succeeding. I could thrive as a tremendous workhorse, and I felt joy in accomplishment; however, it was nowhere near the satisfaction I had from helping others. Despite striking a balance when I was young, as I grew into an adult the work doctrine took over my mind and well before having children I spent the majority of my time working and left barely any time for relaxation or play.

While social interaction may seem decadent compared to dutifully dedicating time to life's responsibilities, it is critical to longevity. In a growing number of studies the critical need for social support has become evident. Loneliness not only increases stress levels but isolation is a "major predictor in early death in healthy people" (Bulletproof, 2012). A Swedish study (Orth-Gomér, Rosengren, & Wilhelmsen, 1993) found that a "lack of social support as been found to predict all causes of mortality in population studies" and that lack of social support was one of two leading risk factors for coronary heart disease (p. 37). A 15 year follow up study showed that those with no social support were 66 percent more likely to develop coronary heart disease than those with the most social support (Rosengren, Wilhelmsen, & Orth-Gomér, (2004). Social support is also

thought to help prevent major depression. Further, separate studies discerning between whether people perceive support or receive support, and concluded that there was a correlations between those who perceived support and lower mortality (Uchino, 2009).

Given the isolating effects of modern technology and the uptick in overloaded schedules, it is easy to allow personal friendships to take a back seat to other responsibilities. Prioritizing time with supportive friends and family members not only helps to extend lifespan but also provides an environment where compassion, empathy and perspectives can be shared and connections can become stronger.

Connection, Support and Creativity

Similar to other wellness practices developing close personal relationships takes and investment of time and energy. Deliberately choosing friends who are supportive is key as unsupportive friends might even have a negative impact on health. This also helps foster one's own affirmative mindset merely by being surrounded by similar positive perspectives, which in turn supports creative thinking. Setting an intention to prioritize regular social time also ensures a regular incoming stream of broad ideas and stimuli, which can foster creative ideation. Additionally, by discussing concepts in groups, one is able to practice and develop the habits of deferring judgment, building on ideas and reaching group consensus. In person interaction helps to hone non-verbal communication skills and builds trust.

Additional Supporting References

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SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Plan to Achieve Goals and Outcomes

While continuing to explore literature on wellness and each of the five core topics and extrapolating conceptual connections between creativity and wellness, I implemented five primary wellness practices into my own life. The intent was for these practices to become or evolve into my personal lifestyle, as I tracked progress for six weeks noting changes, impressions and impact. For each topic I produced an overall summary of key

experiences and insights. I then combined these five sets of insights with reading and research to create a set of blogs highlighting key insights from the project related to creativity and wellness (Appendices E-I). Given the project was both experiential and holistic, I produced a complementary photo journal that highlighted one moment from each day that embodied the wellness journey at that time (Appendix J). This captured the experience in a different way through the joy of photography and select images served well as accompaniment for the blogs.

Sleep/Circadian rhythms

In the area of sleep and circadian rhythms, my goal was to improve sleep hygiene in a multitude of ways, most especially by learning to more closely read biorhythms and understand the best times to sleep and wake in order to feel most rested and in sync with my body. Overall I also sought to increase my overall sleep volume and recover from years of significant sleep deprivation. To do so I studied circadian rhythms through a side course, experimented with different sleep/wake times, and expanded sleep volume overall. I noted significant changes in sleep/wake times, sleep disruption, and overall sleep duration. I also noted impact on other aspects of life such as exercise, attention, emotional state, productivity and creativity.

Somatic/Movement

In the area of somatics and movement, my goal was to study the wisdom of the body, become more aware of it and incorporate deliberate healthful movement into each day. While this included everything from dance classes to walks to dancing in the living room to play with my daughter, I was particularly interested in ‘coming back to the mat’ and re-establishing my long held yoga practice. In daily journaling I noted experiences,

reactions, somatic sensation and learning and how it linked with the other elements of my overall wellbeing.

Nutrition/Hydration

In the area of nutrition and hydration, my goal was to steadily increase the volume and variety of vegetables in my diet while phasing out most processed foods. By becoming more educated about modern nutrition knowledge and identifying new ways to incorporate natural, whole foods I aimed to set a stronger foundation for my personal and family's wellness. Doing so in a way that my family enjoyed was critical for potential long term adoption. By combining recommendations from Sloan Kettering, Clean (Junger, Greeven, & Witkowska, 2013), Nutritarian approaches, and other plant-based food strategies to identify the critical building blocks for the best nutrition, I identified a variety of options that were nutrient-dense, easy to prepare, and enjoyable to consume. I tracked the recipes and food strategies that I tried with special attention towards those we adopted more permanently.

Meditation/Mindfulness

In the area of meditation and mindfulness, my goal was to introduce myself to meditation and make it a daily practice, even if only for 10 minutes each day. To do so I used guided meditation via YouTube, CDs, podcasts and apps as well as contemplative meditations from books by Jack Kornfield (2004), Baron Baptiste (2011) and Rolf Gates (2010). Over time I collected a set of favorite and most effective meditations for regular use and distilled what drew me to them. During daily journaling I any particularly noteworthy experiences or key insights that resulted from the meditation.

Connection/Support

In the area of connection and support, my goal was to connect to a social network outside of my household in my new city. Beyond my close friends with whom I connected via technology, I aimed to form a social group with whom I could regularly interact in person for fun and joined a local women's group that met every few weeks. Additionally, I deliberately become more active on local and international social media, initiated and planned local social excursions with friends, took a language course and joined a Zumba class. During daily journaling I noted all social activities as well as post-event reflections.

Anticipated Results

While the study period was finite, I anticipated significant insights to stem from the experience that guided me in customizing the right combination of wellness habits to continue forward in daily life. Despite the fact that I was implementing multiple wellness practices simultaneously, and it was thus difficult to attribute any outcome to any one practice, the point of the project was to harness the complimentary power of multiple practices and form a holistic approach. It was less important to track what result came from which practice than it was to identify a lifestyle of enhanced wellness and new insights. Additionally, I used this time to identify unrealized challenges to my wellness routine and deliberately solve them in a way that fostered personal growth.

Project Timeline

The design of the project was fluid with trial throughout the week and evaluations each weekend to allow need-based changes. While the below estimates reflect the general approach, the overall time invested in the project ended up being far more than estimated. This was not surprising given it was a vast set of life and lifestyle

Photography	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.75
								29.00
							Six Week Total	162.75
Summation Activity								
Blog Composition								24.00
Photo Journal Compilation								8.00
							Total	32.00
							Grand Total	194.75

You cannot travel on the Path before you have become that Path itself. – Buddha

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore. –

André Gide

This exploration of wellness generated numerous outcomes, some more tangible than others. The research-based preparation alone provided startling insights and changed the way I viewed and defined each core area - wellness, sleep/circadian rhythms, nutrition/hydration, somatic/movement, mindfulness/meditation, and support/connection. The most prominent impact came from applying newly discovered wellness practices in a way that produced new personal habits and thus prompted change throughout my and my family's daily life. It was particularly insightful to witness the truly interdisciplinary nature of wellness as each practice influenced the others and common themes across all of them emerged. While there were significant changes in every area, the most notable were in nutrition, sleep and meditation. I documented several of the other key insights that came from the project in blogs published on the ICSC blog site as well as my personal blog site. The five blogs were entitled: *Enjoying the Exhale: Breathing in*

Creativity & Wellness; Creative Survival: Wellness Beyond Work; Creative Convergence: Making Space for Wellness; Directing Energy: Deliberate Intention in Creativity & Wellness; and Trusting Yourself: The Gateway to Creativity & Wellness (Appendices E-I). These blogs permitted me to share part of the value of this project publically.

Plant-Based Nutrition

Most of what I considered to be healthful eating was drawn into serious question during this project. Avoiding junk food, limiting processed food, favoring the produce aisle and buying organic were not enough to place me where I needed to be. I converted my personal eating habits as well as what I cooked for my family to predominantly plant rather than animal, fresh rather than processed (or cooked), and less rather than more. Beyond salads we experimented with recipes including a variety of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and beans. To enjoy this transition, we expanded the range of produce we ate daily, introduced a variety of new foods and found great flavor combinations.

Eating a plant-based diet, along with staying well hydrated, was energizing. I felt more alert, less sluggish after meals, and lighter. Our bodies quickly adjusted to it and even craved our new baseline foods. It was surprising how easily we transitioned from classic ‘square meals’ to plant-based foods according to hunger, in small portions, more often.

Traditions

Some foods were harder to give up. We realized after a few weeks of plant-based eating how different we felt after having a heavier meal. Through this it became apparent that the reasons we struggled to give up some traditional foods were sentimental and

emotional since some of the foods actually made us feel tired and sick. With this viewpoint, the idea of junk food as a reward flipped on its head and it became more of a punishment – not only did it hurt the body but it made us feel badly as well. I found it fascinating that after just a couple weeks without sugar, one piece of candy produced a raging headache almost immediately.

The new food consciousness in our home also opened an opportunity for us to establish new traditions such as a special meal each Friday and trying a new food each week. This thinking spilled over into family roles as well and we altered the way we shopped, prepped, cooked and cleaned up to be more inclusive and family oriented. We also used it as a way to think about food as fun and used games to help transition the family to new foods such as ‘*who can create the most colorful plate?*’, ‘*what picture can you make out of these ingredients?*’, and ‘*name the flavors.*’ These traditions not only helped us increase nutrition and expand our palette, but also helped each family member pay much more attention to identifying the foods that made us feel good.

Cultural Influence

Moving to a new country immediately before beginning this project ended up being quite an advantage in terms of nutrition and helped certain lessons emerge. Sweden is far more stringent about preservatives and chemicals permitted in food and on produce, and we appreciated the fact that although we must shop more often, the food we eat is far fresher and chemical-free. Separately, Sweden has a culture of moderation that serves significantly smaller portion sizes and encourages basket-sized rather than cart-sized grocery shops. Further, certain foods are much more difficult to buy in Sweden, and this lack of supply encouraged us to find more healthful alternatives. This experience

emphasized the idea that you only eat what you buy and the inherent power of choice. It also helped me realize that a little creativity and willingness to risk ‘failing’ can go a long way in making new meals out of the same old ingredients you normally use in classic ways.

Healing

Upon falling ill during the project I reflected on what foods doctors and mothers recommend when we are sick. Sloan Kettering’s cancer patients were encouraged to supplement with a green vegetable powder to increase the number of plant-based nutrients taken in to their bodies. Further, they were advised to limit portions and keep weight low. This, along with studies showing the body moves to a healing alkaline state when fasting, made me feel much better about not eating when I was not hungry, especially when I was sick. As a result I stopped eating based on mealtime and moved to only eat according to hunger. This was particularly interesting as eating this way ended up naturally aligning much better with my natural biorhythms and sleep cycles.

Storage and Preparation

To supplement the healthful nature of the food we were eating, I began growing my own herbs and lettuce in countertop planters. In addition I stored fruits and vegetables in ceramic containers at room temperature to enable their natural ripening process. It was important insight to realize that eating them at room temperature allowed me to taste their flavors more readily, digest them better and maintain my body temperature more easily. I also eliminated plastic containers to the greatest extent possible, particularly when heating food, as well as substituted silicon lids for plastic wrap. I also changed to cooking and storing food predominantly in ceramic and glassware to protect the food

from absorbing chemicals from plastics and non-stick coatings.

Hydration

One of the most critical elements to wellness is hydration, particularly drinks without sugar or chemicals. To increase the amount I drank I purchased a stainless steel water bottle to keep with me at my desk and as we traveled out of the house. By having water at arm's length I was far more likely to remain hydrated and felt thirsty far less frequently. I drank approximately two to three liters per day, mostly between meals to avoid diluting digestion. In addition, we eliminated drinking milk as a beverage and increased the amount of green and herbal tea we drank as an alternative to water.

The increase in daily hydration improved skin tone, reduced headaches, and reduced hunger. In addition, I became acutely aware of when I was thirsty instead of hungry, and was thus able to address the need for water without consuming excess food. Further, as we moved to a plant-based diet, we noticed a significant increase in hydration from the food alone. Plants lose their water over time once picked, and thus hydration was one more reason why we changed our habit and made a deliberate effort to shop more often and eat our produce as soon as possible after buying it rather than saving it over time.

Sleep

While fortunate to have never struggled with sleep quality, I realized through this project that there is far more to understanding the role of sleep in personal wellness and creativity. Most importantly, I learned that sleep, like all aspects of wellness, is deeply interconnected with the quality and content of waking hours. Elements as simple as fresh air or exercise significantly impact the duration and quality of sleep and its benefits to the

body. The concept of sleep hygiene speaks to the set of personal habits around sleep routine and it includes a highly complex web of factors. Over the course of the project my sleep hygiene changed significantly, often in subtle ways I had not anticipated.

Sleep hygiene

Personally, through trial and error I found specific elements pivotal to my sleep hygiene: establishing and enjoying a pre-bedtime ritual, napping when needed (and possible), adopting a sleep mask, maximizing room darkness, carefully choosing the right type of pillow, using smaller pillows to aid body alignment, consuming smaller and lighter evening meals, maintaining good hydration throughout the day, practicing meditation immediately before bed, stretching, practicing progressive muscle relaxation, and timing sleep in synchrony with my circadian rhythms where possible. I also found that supplemental elements, such as aromatherapy, music, and fresh air via open windows also improved my degree of relaxation and sleep quality at times. By including these elements in my daily sleep routine I not only increased sleep duration by one to three hours per night, but I also improved sleep quality as I experienced an increase in dreaming, greater ease in waking, elevated mood in the morning, greater tolerance for stress during the day, improved alertness throughout the day and greater emotional value towards sleeping. This final aspect, valuing sleep on an emotional, physical and cognitive level, improved my overall willingness to turn in each night, which was by far the greatest challenge to my sleep volume and personal health at the beginning of the project.

By the end of the six weeks, my sleep routine had changed to include three primary elements: preparatory rituals, physical movement and meditation. Preparatory rituals

included lowering the ambient light around the house 20-30 minutes before bedtime, talking about going to bed soon and the need for rest to prepare the mind for sleep, choosing pajamas that made me feel relaxed and comfortable, washing my face with warm water and a more gentle cleanser, applying a comfortable face cream or body oil (sometimes with a rose, lavender or hyacinth scent), dental care, using a night guard to prevent jaw clenching, taking vitamins and probiotics, removing blue light (screens and LED lights), turning down the bed, placing pillows where they are most comfortable and block the window draft, and laying out my most comfortable sleep mask. Each night I employed select yoga poses to release somatic and emotional tension from the day. In addition, I practiced progressive muscle relaxation to help relax my body for sleep and increase my awareness and connection with my body in preparation for meditation. As the last step before bed I performed a 10-40 minute meditation, always including deep, slow breathing, usually in the dark with headphones. The meditations often impacted my dreams as well as my emotional state the following morning, not to mention my circulation and breathing rhythms. What was most compelling about meditating before bed was that the themes of guided meditations or specific statements I contemplated resonated with me through the night and the entirety of the following day and sometimes beyond. I awoke with them on the edge of my mind and was often primed in the direction they advised – feeling relaxed, supported, or energized. It felt as though the mind reinforced the meditation during sleep and made a deeper connection between mind and body state.

Sharing the Gift of Sleep

Further, as I learned what best assisted me to sleep, some simple habits emerged

that ended up being quite effective with my three-year-old daughter as well. I stretched her limbs and guided her practice of deep, slow breathing to help her relax, particularly when she had missed her normal bedtime window and her body was heading towards a new waking cycle. I also narrated vivid meditations for her to envision with her eyes closed that empowered her to relax, become aware of her body, and even direct self-healing. During the time that we were both sick together, we deliberately discussed the healing power of sleep and what it would do for our health and bodies each night. When we were well, she specifically enjoyed discussing how sleep helps us grow and remain healthy. Beyond habits, we worked together to create the coziest room and bed for her possible in our new home. By painting the walls a more familiar color, constructing special low light lamps made from flower lights, arranging cozy pillows to protect her from flopping into the wall in her sleep, and hanging a pink gauzy canopy over her bed, she felt more comfortable and eager to go to bed. Each night she looked forward to nestling in the pillows to read stories before wishing on a star, stretches, and meditation. Some nights her meditations put her to sleep on their own.

One of the most notable changes for my sleep also came from assisting my daughter with her slumber. By further darkening her room, keeping an earlier and more consistent bedtime, and establishing a stronger bedtime ritual she was able to fall asleep more easily and remain asleep in the early morning much longer. By eliminating her tendency towards early waking, the entire family obtained an additional one to two hours more sleep in the mornings, a time that is particularly valuable to my personal body rhythm.

Illness as a Gateway

Towards the beginning of the project I adopted all sorts of new habits and left modifying sleep for last. I was so excited by new social outlets, meditation, yoga poses and nutritional ideas that I kept my initial sleep study mostly to theory and habit tracking. I had added many new habits to my already full plate and quickly sought to use late evening hours to complete my work. However, my body, already in need of rest, not only found its plea unheard but experienced additional sleep reduction taking place and quickly shut me down two weeks into the project with a horrible cold and raging fever. Overnight, sleep became my top priority. Suddenly in response to the illness, I increased the volume of my sleep consistently and serendipitously made the wellness change I had originally intended.

By exploring wellness through an opposing polarity, I discovered lessons I may not have otherwise uncovered. In the throws of physical illness no other area of wellness was more pivotal to healing than sleep. Through the sickness I was starkly reminded of the value of sleep and its role in our lives. Each day we do damage to ourselves and we move towards a state of dis-ease; yet sleep repairs much of it and moves us back towards ease. While illness is an advanced form of this daily damage, it is no different in concept. Left to compound the damage may become far worse, or even permanent.

Through the experience of illness I came to realize that sleep, above all other aspects of wellness, is foundational for me. Without it, I could not function the way I wanted or needed in the other realms. There simply is no wellness without sleep. After years of sleep deprivation and a preference for staying up late without the option to sleep later in the morning, a more permanent deficit had accrued. My total sleep volume improved considerably during the time of this project and I found the associated

improvements in waking attitude, ability to function and interest in activities to be a fantastic leap in the right direction. That said, I still need further work to achieve the recovery and permanent sleep habit I need.

Awake at this hour?

I have always been a night owl. Studying my circadian rhythms during this project echoed this fact as when left to my internal clock I stay up 2-3 hours past the average and wake later as well. However, following my natural sleep tendencies at night encouraged me to stay awake despite the fact that social responsibilities prevented me sleeping past 6:30am the next morning, therein creating a serious chronic case of social jetlag. To overcome this I began to employ a method of focusing on how I will feel the following day if I go to bed earlier versus staying up after too late. Using deeper meditative thinking skills to recall the drastically different resultant morning states helps to encourage me to get to bed. It has also prompted me to employ CPS to identify several different ways I can arrange our family schedule and habits to more closely align with each person's natural sleep cycles and avoid unnecessary sleep disruption.

Recovery

Weekend recovery only helps so much, but it does help. When particularly behind on sleep, I revived a habit that got me through pregnancy: napping. As my body temperature dipped around 3pm or 4pm I would nestle in for a quick rest – sometimes waking three hours later. This involved communication and coordination with the entire household on valuing sleep to the point of avoiding disruption, which was another big accomplishment stemming from this project.

Quality of waking hours. Over the course of the mindfulness element of the

project it became clear that struggling to get to bed was actually less about will power or allegiance to personal night owl rhythms and more about the quality of my day and how closely I lived to what was most important to me. This realization was astounding to me and deeply emphasized the importance of making one's time fulfilling as a critical part of overall wellness. A day filled with checking boxes on emotionally empty activities in response to others' demands left me up late in search of meaningful activities and seeking to put distance between myself and the somewhat depressing prospect of experiencing it all over again the following day. A day filled with deep personal connection with my family and friends or invigorating new experiences or projects left me satisfied and more eager to greet the following day, as well as more tired and in need of recovery, and thus much more able to head to bed. I also realized that quiet time to myself to read and connect socially online was so critical that I avoided sleep simply to add it into already jam-packed days. I realized that late at night was the one time of day I felt that taking that time for myself did not take away from others' needs or demands. Life as a busy working mother can seem like an unending set of external demands, and taking pause at night after the world had gone to sleep felt healing.

Once I realized this I was able to employ CPS tools to help identify ways to fulfill this need that did not require losing two to three hours of sleep each night. I ended up with a set of solutions that balanced across needs. The first came in the form of moving the family evening schedule earlier and ensuring my daughter was in bed at her bedtime consistently. This required cutting off work activities at 5pm, making dinner regardless of whether the entire family was home, setting new expectations for the family and setting up a new set of bedtime rituals to incent my daughter to adopt the new plan. Not

only did this maximize sleep for my daughter at night and in the morning and improve the quality of her days, but it also moved the family waking time later in the morning allowing for everyone to increase sleep volume despite the fact that it was getting lighter earlier each day. Further, living in a climate of long summer days, we also contended with extremely early sun in the mornings and evening sunsets moving later so quickly that it is difficult to judge the time from them. I implemented alarms on my phone and calendar to help mark what time it was and keep up the improved evening schedule as well as light blocking shades to mask the majority of the late/early sunlight. I also implemented a deliberate practice of getting a strong dose of bright sun first thing in the morning to help stay on schedule biologically. Additionally, by feeling more rested in the morning, I was more productive with the first hours of the day, taking less time to complete tasks that took longer at night when I was low on energy. Finally, by prioritizing my responsibilities and getting the most important tasks accomplished I was better able to balance responsibilities, relationships, hobbies and schoolwork while still getting more sleep. Not only did I actively work to declutter my schedule, but also re-evaluate what was on it to ensure those items that brought me and my family more joy and wellness were given top billing. While sleep hygiene began more about a simple routine before bed, it evolved to be as much about building in personal time and priorities during the day as it was about sleep preparation or sleep itself.

Daily Meditation and Mindfulness

One of the most pivotal outcomes of this project was exploring meditation for the first time to the point of developing a daily practice. The first few meditations I tried the first week of this project had a profound effect on me each time. I literally changed my

blood flow and circulation with my mind. I improved my perspective on concerns, lifted my spirits when I felt alone and felt connected with the world around me. It was startling and fun. The meditations acted like a filter over the greater lens of my viewpoint during waking hours. I carried the perspective with me for hours, days and weeks after just ten or twenty minutes of focusing on it. Yet while the meditations had a lasting effect, I also quickly realized the importance of doing them daily, sometimes multiple times a day. They centered me, calmed me and brought me back to my core.

On days I skipped meditating before bed I felt less rested and more anxious upon waking and felt less in touch with my body and the world around me. Overall, meditation felt like I was actively growing my senses, then those senses would be alive and sensing all day in the form of mindfulness. As a very cognitive person who has been accused of over thinking things at times, I found meditation to be an incredibly liberating way of ‘thinking’. Thinking with all senses. Thinking with my body. Thinking with my heart and soul. I found that I preferred this way of going through life to an overly cognitive approach. It was connected yet restful. It was less overtly analytical and more subconsciously process focused. This powerful positive experience quickly drew me to continue each day and quickly establish a habit of meditation every night before bed and sometimes during the day.

Energy

Meditation and mindfulness center on directing energy through attention and intention. All matter is made of energy and new thoughts are essentially newly generated matter. As Gandhi (1968) said, “man is but the product of his thoughts, what he thinks he becomes.” Through the meditation practice I began learning how to more deliberately

direct my personal energy; a habit that is critical in wellness, creativity and achieving goals.

Spiritual

For much of my theoretical work on meditation I have often wandered into realms considered spiritual. However, for most of the project I resisted broaching that term given the potential for contention or misinterpretation of it's meaning. Ironically, it was the practice of meditation and mindfulness each day that enabled me to let go of my concerns over this word and become open to using it to facilitate the discussion. For the purposes of this project I used Chandler, Holden and Kolander's (1992) definition of spirituality, "pertaining to the innate capacity to, and tendency to seek to, transcend one's current locus of centrality, which transcendence involves increased knowledge and love" (p. 169). Further, by reflecting on my personal experience practicing meditation and comparing it to their model, I changed my concept of wellness to make meditation and mindfulness a more ubiquitous element that supports all other wellness elements, similar to the way I view the skill set of creativity.

We suggest that spiritual health not be conceptualized as just one of the six dimensions of wellness. Spiritual health should be considered as a component present, along with a personal component, within each of the interrelated and interactive dimensions of wellness (i.e., social, physical, emotional, intellectual, and occupational). (Chandler, Holden & Kolander, 1992, p. 171)

Meaning

Much of what brings meaning to my life comes from the idea of purpose. Many of my favorite written meditations ended up coming from *Meditations from the Mat* (Gates

& Kenison, 2002). The book was written in a way that serves as a daily companion and provides ‘discussion’ and perspective on the meditation from the author’s point of view. I found this second method of meditation to be much more cognitive than my primary form of listening to guided meditations. My mind wandered much more when contemplating a short written meditation and did not experience nearly the same sense of calm as when I did guided meditations. That said, I found richness and fulfillment to have these new thoughts coming in each day. Some were eerily applicable to the events at hand, seeming to be timed perfectly. As I tried different formats of meditation on different topics, I came away realizing that each form had its own use, time and place, which was far more liberating than adhering to one form all of the time.

In contrast, one of the primary meditations I most enjoyed contemplating was the idea that you are not your thoughts; a seeming contradiction to Gandhi’s quote earlier. However, in fact they infer different things. Gandhi was emphasizing the role of choice and control over our actions and the thoughts those actions derive from; whereas, the meditation was emphasizing the need for letting go and allowing thoughts to flow without judgment or attachment to pleasure. Yoga explains it as a second you who acts as a quiet witness to the thoughts floating by. Such disassociation changes previously assigned meanings and allows one to see with fresh eyes. This dichotomy embodies a new mindset I learned through practicing meditation and a key set of lenses I now try to use in everyday life, particularly in creative thinking.

Creative Mindset

While this project focused on learning and living wellness practices in a personalized way each day, I did so with a viewpoint fostered by the International Center

for Studies in Creativity Master's of Science program in Creative Studies. In doing so the principles of creative thinking turned what could have been a rote implementation of new habits into an exercise of keen awareness, deep reflection, and courage to break boundaries. Those principles were also the pivotal tool that enabled me to continue when I got stuck and succeed after failing. More than anything, this journey enhanced and solidified the creative mindset that initially helped me design and navigate a personalized wellness program. Using thinking and CPS tools in a fluid, everyday manner on highly complex and interwoven challenges was an invigorating experience. It was mindfulness, problem solving, listening, and synthesizing in a real-time, high stakes personal laboratory. Making such a vulnerable and honest effort helped clarify my personal priorities even moreso throughout the journey. The experience also touched others who shared pieces of it with me – family members changed their nutrition principles, relatives initiated health programs and friends considered how their own wellness journeys might inform their future vocations and goals. While too numerous to count, the outcomes of this project were far richer than I ever expected. Most significantly, the many outcomes lead to a vast set of key learnings that I documented and reflected upon throughout the course of the project. Like creative ideation, the learnings built on one another – by becoming aware of one learning, it allowed me to follow that path forward for further insight. The learnings were so numerous that I had to include only primary take-aways in this paper, which follow in section five.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

This wellness journey was bursting with insights, large and small, from start to

finish. Next to increased wellness, these insights were the other primary products of the project. By developing a new viewpoint on myself and on the way I live my life, I was able to understand so much more about what has geared my decision-making as well as fueled my frustrations and need for change. Most importantly I was able to dismantle guiding assumptions that were no longer useful and replace them with far more effective viewpoints. Using this mindset, I learned some extremely valuable lessons that will gear my life going forward. The primary takeaways centered on the symbiotic nature of wellness and creativity; the role that wellness and creativity play in self-actualization; the wisdom of the body; self-trust and permission as gateways to both wellness and creativity; the fundamental role of intention in directing energy within both creativity and wellness; the natural need to let go and create space for new growth; and the pivotal role of deep breathing for wellness, cognition and creativity.

Symbiosis of Wellness & Creativity

Striving for wellness is much more than striving for health. It is striving for a customized life that fits best with individual and circumstantial needs and goals. It is not about keeping up with boxing checking or obeying every new health fad. It is about reflecting, understanding the self, and finding the things that help one thrive. Creativity is pivotal to achieving that in a personalized way that grows into a lifestyle. Creativity and wellness have a very symbiotic relationship; wellness fosters excellent creative function in a multitude of ways and creativity fosters the ability of the individual to problem solve as well as customize wellness practices, therein achieving a more ideal and sustainable state of wellness (Appendix K). This project provided incredible clarity on how much wellness and creativity depend on each other in a foundational way, setting

each other up for success.

Wellness Fosters Creativity

Both wellness and creativity are paths toward self-actualization. Some might even say that wellness is a foundation that figures into every aspect of creativity from intellect to broadening experiences to comfort with novelty to adjustment to change to awareness of personal goals and needs. Without wellness, problem solving on a cognitive level can become sidetracked by the need to recover wellness or the consequences that the lack of wellness brings. CPS includes tools such as the ladder of abstraction that help challenge holders go to the root of a problem and understand that more fundamental life demands often motivate specific goals. CPS works best when those foundational motivations are kept close in mind as the ultimate goal. Wellness often links to those foundational goals such as, “I just want my children to feel happy” or “I want to enjoy my career while I support my family.”

Creativity Fosters Wellness

By becoming aware of and customizing our own wellness, we are more likely to be able to identify the most critical problems to solve and thus choose the most pivotal challenges on which to apply creative thinking. Such awareness also helps individuals to manage ambiguity and unsolvable issues more readily. Wellness also has a tremendous impact on cognitive and emotional function; the better our wellness, the more capable our bodies and minds become. Experiencing a journey towards wellness and learning its associated lessons, as well as achieving wellness, enables one to focus mental, emotional and physical resources towards creative productivity rather than being distracted by a lack of wellness.

The mindset required for wellness also assists in better harnessing our own creative ability and generating our best products. Wellness is not easy to achieve. A simple goal to replace large meals with light ones of mostly vegetables and fruit does not seem so profound on the surface; however, making that simple change can require resetting family traditions, going against social norms, changing shopping routines, learning new ways to prepare food and experimenting with new ingredients. This, like many wellness practices, is a small change with a significant problem solving and change management component.

Somatic Wisdom

Creativity is predominantly characterized as cognitive; however, it is far more. Wellness is often treated the same way; as a habit that one must mentally supplant rather than a holistic lifestyle that involves your entire being. By using the mind to manage and solve problems, it leaves a lot of wisdom and support on the cutting room floor. The body holds incredible wisdom and if we become aware of it and appeal to it, there is a greater chance for identifying true personal needs and fulfilling them. Classically wellness was described as a balance between body, mind and spirit. By incorporating sensory information, corporeal responses, and emotions into the larger picture it becomes fuller and more accurate.

Learning literature echoes this; while academic study is tremendous, there is no better way to learn than through experience (Meier, 2000). Humankind has innovated via trial and error since the dawn of man and I took the same approach with this project to great success. Applying wellness practices within my own life was a far richer experience than any book could share. It was akin to singing a song rather than listening

to a recording of it – I could feel it throughout my body and mind and I lead the experience proactively rather than observing it reactively. By stepping out of solely cognitive and conceptual space I used my other senses and abilities to explore each new experience and feel when a particular practice resonated as right for me. By using this sensory balance it became easier not only to evaluate a new experience, but also to read my own body and sense it changing in response.

Matter over mind

The experience of illness was also a useful lesson in the need for balance and alignment between the mind and body. The practice of meditation teaches us to tune into our physical body and tune out from the chatter in our minds to reach a different mental level. Regular practice helps to implement a more mindful existence with the self. When an individual is tuned into their own mind and their cognitive intentions, one can become distracted from the negative impact on the body. However, the mind can only override physical needs for so long before the wisdom of the body takes over to achieve balance and restore health. Further, wellness requires balance across all areas rather than just physical health.

Intuition

Once I began leveraging my senses, emotions and other somatic wisdom, it helped me to open up mental blocks that were suppressing change. At its heart this was a step towards behaving in accordance with personal needs and intuition, as well as a means of increasing personal and familial wellness. This spiritual level of wellness, including mindfulness and intuition, enhances the ability to extract meaning from that multi-sensory information and apply it in ways that create value.

Self-Knowledge

What is easy to forget in an age of assembly line education and ubiquitous socialization is that every individual in the population is different and thus, while wellness guidelines generally apply to all people, in truth each individual must determine what practices are most effective personally. By respecting our own unique composition of needs and preferences, we are able to most accurately build our personal wellness and most powerfully leverage our creative abilities. Yet to do so takes the willingness to listen to the signals your body sends over the din of cognition. No one can tell you what combination of wellness practices are right for you – they may be able to recommend some based on health deficits, but in the end only you can test those and select those that work best. To select accurately, the decision must include affective and somatic thinking to balance and supplement the cognitive.

Self-Trust as a Gateway to Wellness & Creativity

As part of creating one's own meaning from available information, one must have enough ability to self-evaluate and enough confidence to implement those realizations in the face of social norms. Gardner (2011) called these two abilities interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. This can be the most difficult aspect of wellness due to the dichotomy of two, sometimes opposing, needs: social acceptance and support to be well and customizing personal behaviors to individual and family wellness needs. This same concept holds true in the realm of creativity. Creators need support to be their most creative, and yet staying true to one's ideas, craft, creative methods and personal needs sometimes opposes social norms and thus reduces that social support. In both cases, while those pursuing personalized wellness and creative expression could make the

drastic choice between society and their own conscience as Thoreau (1854) did at Walden Pond, or instead work to find their tribe - those who share similar beliefs and support their choices. This is a key to success in every endeavor.

Building Your Tribe

Change is difficult. Making significant changes in an environment when everyone else keeps the old habits is much harder. As much as society glorifies independence, finding support is one of the best ways to keep to a new lifestyle. Many people will not know you need support unless you ask, at which point many are overjoyed to do whatever they can to help. Asking for help is extremely difficult, but at the end of the day what is there to fear in simply asking? The vulnerability and honesty you share may inspire great compassion, and if it does not, there are many other avenues where you can find what you need.

Creativity can feel very personal; however, most new ideas are built on combinations of others' ideas. As part of our archetype of responsibility, it's easy to feel as though we alone must solve our own problems. Yet, in truth, it is by including others that we build on our own ideas and hone them in ways we would not have otherwise done. Asking others for input or assistance solidifies your commitment to solving that problem or creating that product as well as opens an incredible array of input to evolve your ideas further to be their most effective or unique. Finally, involving others also provides you the support of others during a process of exploration and change, which may help you feel comfortable enough to pursue ideas farther and more invested and likely to implement your outcome.

Balance

Through this project it became clear that I was weighing cultural influence far too heavily in my personal choices to the point of sacrificing personal and familial wellness as well as creative freedom. For years, rather than seeing my preferences to raise my own daughter and pursue less mainstream fields as wrong or weak, I committed to and pursued them while maintaining a foothold in mainstream corporate life. However, it remains a root of great stress and a lifestyle that opposes wellness. As President Lincoln so aptly said, “a house divided against itself cannot stand” (Lincoln, 1958). While in the last couple years I have made great strides in steering my corporate career toward topics that align with my true interests and skillsets, this project has highlighted that much more change is required. Further, the project has highlighted specific wellness elements that I have successfully incorporated into my life, yet seek to increase: reducing or eliminating deskwork, avoiding a daily commute, investing time in wellness throughout the day rather than solely before and after work, making my own schedule, and dedicating my time to topics more deeply aligned to personal priorities and passions.

Letting Go to Create Space

Meditation teaches release. By becoming aware of feelings and intentions we are holding and then letting go of them it reduces mental and emotional constraints. The idea of letting things go is foreign to much of western society who are focused on personally influencing the world. Meditation enabled the realization that one might be more effective at achieving wellness, happiness, influence or other goals by letting go rather than holding on so tight. All natural processes have a point of letting go – if the tree does not drop its leaves it cannot grow new ones, if the mother does not give a child freedom she will never learn self-sufficiency, if the body does not give in to sleep each night it

will eventually die. In fact, sleep is a wonderful example of letting go that everyone can relate to well. The physical, mental and cognitive pleasure that comes from sleeping and dreaming is similar to the feelings generated by meditation.

In every system, intake balances with output. Every inhale is only valuable with its corresponding exhale. In order to take new ideas, habits and things into our lives, we must in turn let others go. In fact, one must let go of old concepts, rules and limits first before new ones might be established. In meditation one must let go of the mind's chatter to receive its calm realizations. In exercise we must expend effort to take in new strength. In social life we must clear our calendars to accommodate new plans. On a more literal sense, decluttering both physically and mentally is pivotal to both wellness and creativity. Letting go creates space. Beyond that it also relinquishes ties that previously confined thinking and behavior.

The greater theme of release became dominant throughout the project. The idea was initially an outcome of my meditation practice and then grew in applicability across all areas of wellness. It is only by deliberately creating space through letting things go that there is room for new ideas or habits. Release facilitates growth in wellness and creativity.

Pursuing wellness takes a lot of resources including awareness, time, attention, problem solving, dedication, nutritious food, means of communication, etc. Approaching wellness proactively helps to streamline resources towards specific goals. The habits encouraged by western society work against wellness for the most part. As a result, a decision to pursue wellness can be quite a journey. To do so successfully means prioritizing wellness above old habits and making space in one's life for both exploration

and new behaviors.

This principle holds for creativity as well. To solve problems well, or create in a way that truly represents your own expression, or contribute your best, one must first make the effort a priority and dedicate time and energy to it. Much like CPS facilitation, if an individual can invest a few hours toward solving something important to him, he will likely find a far greater return on that investment of time and energy. Similarly, practicing everyday creativity takes awareness and attention. It requires space to hold those foundational ideas in your mind to help guide your thoughts and actions. It all begins with making space for it in your own life and recognizing it as a priority.

Constant Regeneration

In nature we see constant regeneration. This is a guiding habit of wellness and creativity as well. No one solution is meant to solve a problem forever. No single wellness state will last in a changing environment of new stressors and demands. Thus life demands that we re-evaluate every so often and regenerate our goals, methods and outcomes as needed. If we are aware enough, our emotions and bodies signal when it is time for regeneration, even when the mind dogmatically pursues the expired solution. In many ways, this renewal is freeing in that whatever end state we change towards is not permanent but rather a step along the greater evolution of our lives.

Direct Your Energy

Wellness and creativity both begin with clear intention. By clarifying the goal state, it frees us to find many paths to get there. Different elements of wellness assist in directing personal energy – the food we eat, the way we move, the thoughts we think, the people we choose to interact with, and even the more literal exploration of life force

through meditation. In the same way, many of the direct and indirect thinking tools involved in creativity lead to directing personal energy in a specific way.

Curiosity

Curiosity is a form of motivation, an energy that is readily linked with creativity given that it draws people to investigate new things, absorb new information, and in the process make new associations on the way to potentially building novel concepts. What may not be as obvious is the role of curiosity in wellness. One study showed that “the degree to which people are curious actively influences their personal growth opportunities and the level of intimacy that develops when they meet someone new” (Donovan, 2002). By helping to foster social relationships, positive experiences and intrinsic motivation, curiosity plays a crucial role in wellness (Donovan, 2002).

Curiosity also plays a critical role in forming and asking the right questions and ensuring that energy invested in the effort does not go ‘to waste’ (Berger, 2014). Curiosity-based methods like appreciative inquiry, problem deconstruction and problem finding are important roads to creative thinking. However, they are also key to pursuing personal wellness. Curiosity not only assists in identifying needs, but supports an open-minded approach to trying new means of fulfilling them.

Absorb & Emit

There are two polarities to energy in wellness and creativity: absorption and emission. It is just as critical to consider what we are taking in, or deprived of taking in, as what we are sharing outward. That said, it is all life force, or as they call it in yoga, *prana*. This energy links us to those around us. While I naturally oriented towards expression, through this project I learned how critical it is to be deliberate about what

energy you take in. Choosing social avenues that foster growth. Eating living food, which has considerable more energy and nutrients. Meditating on a topic that resonates deeply that day. All interaction from people to pets to plants involves an exchange of energy. By exchanging energy with our environment, we become more part of it. In wellness this exists in every subcategory of experience from spiritual wellness to social wellness. In creativity it founds the core principle behind recombining ideas and building upon what is there. Wellness and creativity ultimately come down to exchanging energy in specific ways to obtain specific outcomes. Understanding more about our personal energy and the energy systems of the world might foster our ability to pursue both wellness and creativity.

Deliberate Direction

Further, our energy direction determines what our bodies do with each input. In wellness, one's approach to eating impacts how the body treats food. Eating proactively maintains the intent of eating at the forefront – eating for energy, nutrition, and wellness – as opposed to reactive eating in which consumption is driven by outside forces that may not align with the ultimate intent (Hever, 2012). In creativity, the choice to defer judgment or build on an idea is in effect deliberately directing energy in a particular way. Our overall mindset is a choice about how we direct our energy. This choice has a serious impact on whether or not we achieve wellness or pursue creativity with success.

Well Being and Well Doing

Wellness is often referred to as wellbeing. Being refers to a state of existing. But in truth, wellness actually centers more on well doing. Wellness is not passive, it is a constant state of action. In fact, wellness matches our body and environmental rhythms

and must be maintained daily. Wellness is not a plant you water once a week; it needs constant tending. The same holds true for creativity. By practicing creativity skills throughout each day and living your life according to them, they not only become stronger and more useful but they also maintain their symbiosis with wellness practices. Creating space and decluttering life is one of the best ways to ensure there is not only enough time for wellness and creativity practices, but also enough down time to recover from the constant doing.

Balance in Wellness & Creativity

One could spend every waking minute of every day dedicated to personal wellness or creativity and still never attain perfection. Practicing either wellness or creativity is about achieving balance amongst the forces in your life and leading your own future. The amount of resources it takes to dedicate oneself to wellness or creativity is enough to easily take resources away from other life pursuits. As a result, either mindset or lifestyle is most effective when balanced with the rest of your life. Wellness and creativity are both primary life methods towards greater thriving, but they are means as much as they are ends.

Additionally, both wellness and creativity are multifaceted topics. Focusing on any one subcomponent would create a significant imbalance and likely prevent the realization of wellness or creative products. The holistic nature of both wellness and creativity require that all components remain in balance so not to diminish or strain the others. Further, both wellness and creativity balance between the internal and external, self and others, reality and possible, current and future, and leading and following self.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSIONS

A classic view of creativity involves generating a tangible product. To perform a final project that did not produce a large end product for the world was a real struggle for me. This project was more subtle and personal. While personal exploration and growth were valuable, tangible products, in fact more tangible to me than most, it felt much different than most of my creative output in the past. It was not meant as a product for society or a personal expression or an entertainment. The project was not built around achieving a particular product but rather around seeing what I might learn by combining new wellness knowledge with my current creativity practice and what path I might form towards a higher goal of wellness, creativity and self-actualization. It was only from there that I could then pen the blogs to capture the essences of some of the learning.

Experience is one of the most valuable products a person can create and wellness is one of the ultimate experiences. After six weeks of this wellness pursuit, including going down the rabbit hole of illness and coming back out again, the retrospective is one of great transition. It was experiencing each wellness practice as well as combining and synthesizing them that provided such rich takeaways and prompted permanent changes not only in my personal habits but in my family's as well. It was feeling the polarities within each realm of wellness to appreciate their value. It was applying creativity skills in the stress and strain and mess of life to understand their power.

As I continue to explore, the world looks and feels different. It is as if layers of new truth have been revealed all while my new skills were increasingly validated. I trust myself. I plan to continue with the wellness practices I established during this time and evolve them further in accordance with new needs. I also plan to find additional

opportunities to throw myself in the deep end and swim through using my creativity skills as paddles. The knowledge and experience I built through this project have prompted what is certain to be a life-long pursuit of personal wellness facilitated through creativity. It is my hope that this is the first step in one day sharing with others the many ways that wellness reciprocally fosters creativity.

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Appendix A

Comparison of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Seven Energy Chakras

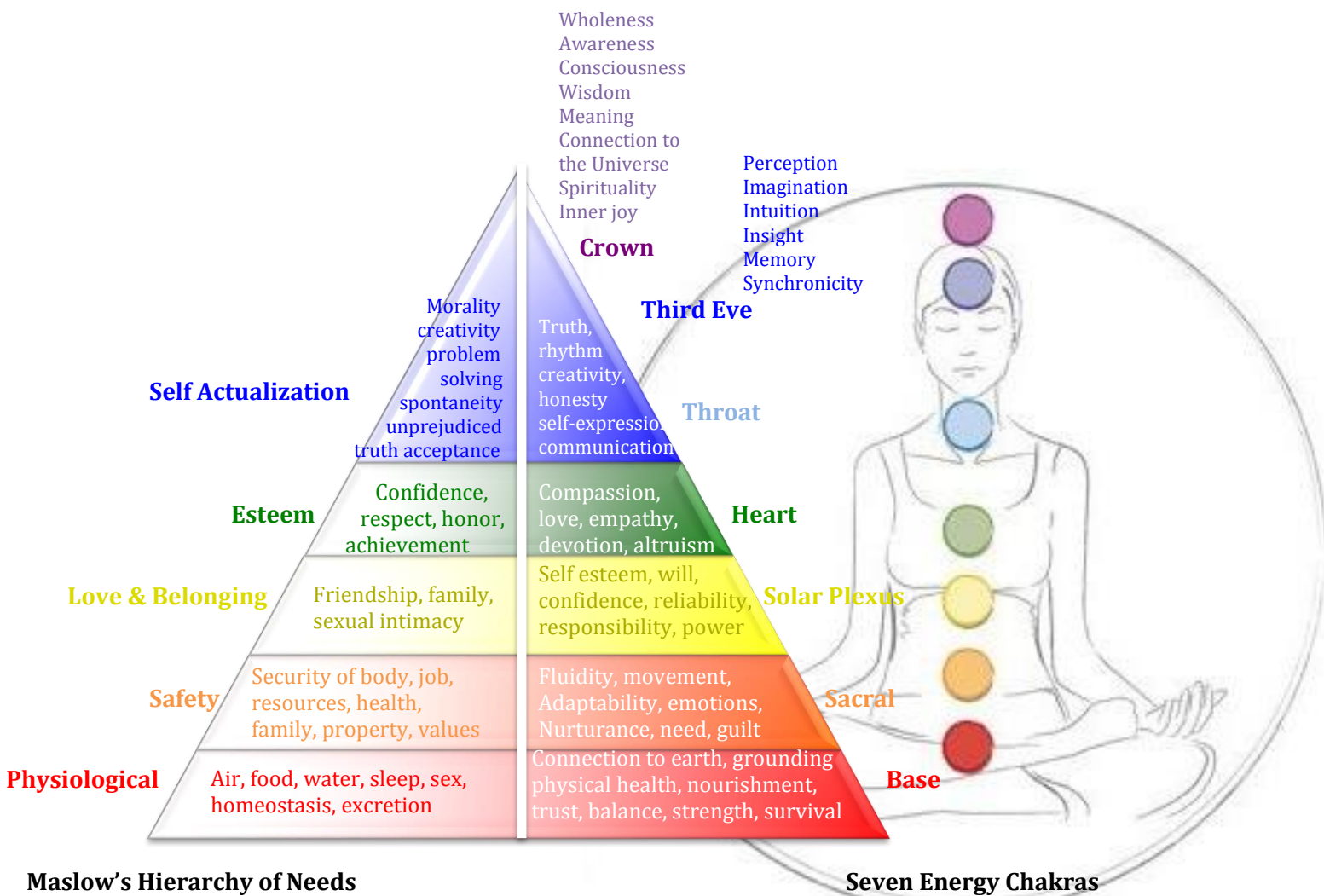
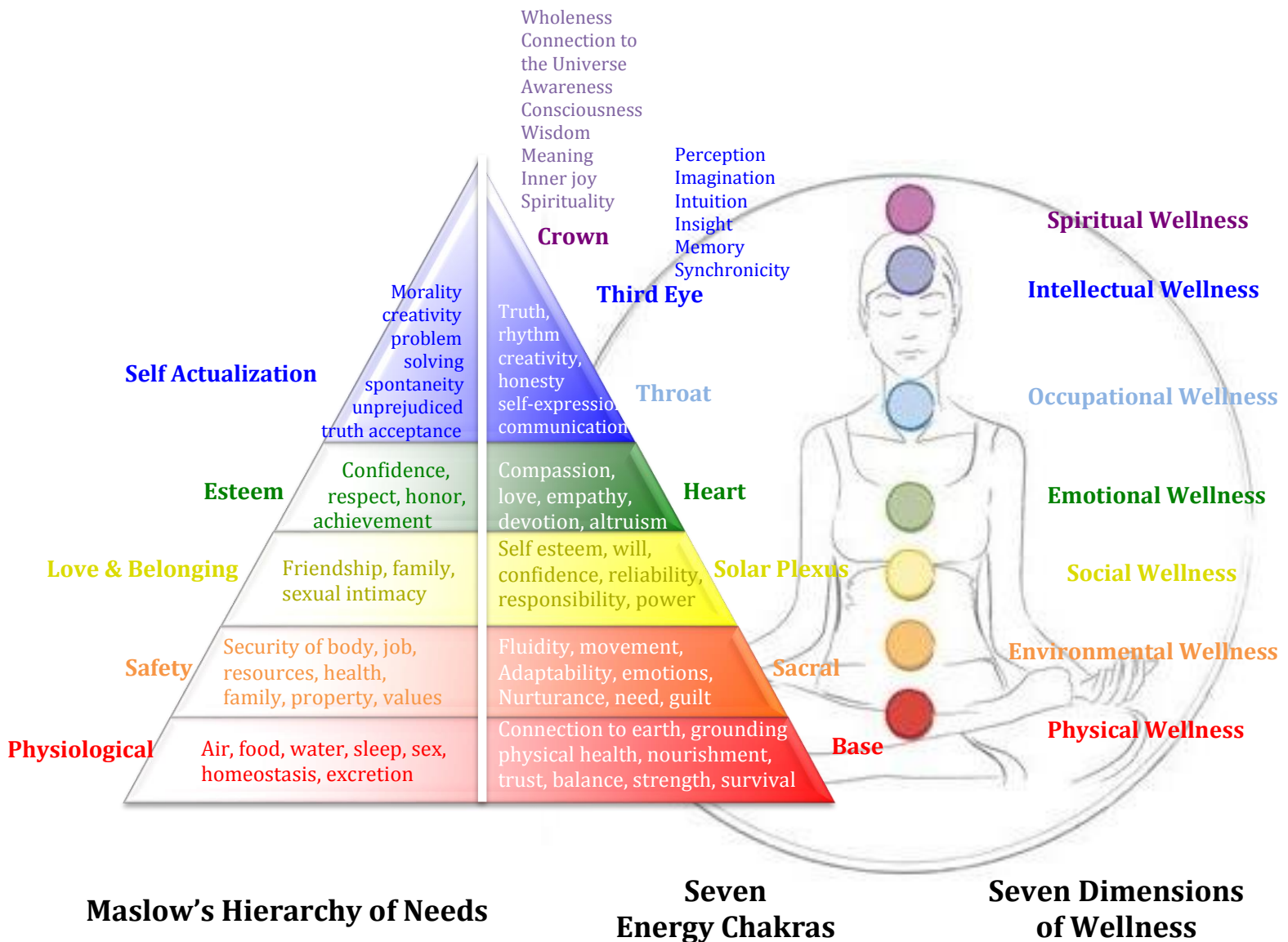


Figure A. A comparative diagram of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the seven energy chakras. While not exact, there exists considerable overlap between the meaning gradients of needs and body energies. Chakra philosophy may help integrate Maslow's conceptual needs into the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual realms of wellness activities. It is possible that viewing these needs as part of personal energy and physical body that one may be better able to evoke compassion and caring for these needs.

Diagram created by the author; chakra image retrieved from <http://www.energy-healing-info.com/image-files/seven-chakras-2.jpg>

Appendix B Parallels Between Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Seven Energy Chakras and Seven Dimensions of Wellness



Appendix C
National Wellness Institute's Six-Dimension Wellness Model



Figure B. National Wellness Institute's six dimension model of wellness, retrieved from http://www.nationalwellness.org/?page=Six_Dimensions

Appendix D
Internal/External Wellness Cycle

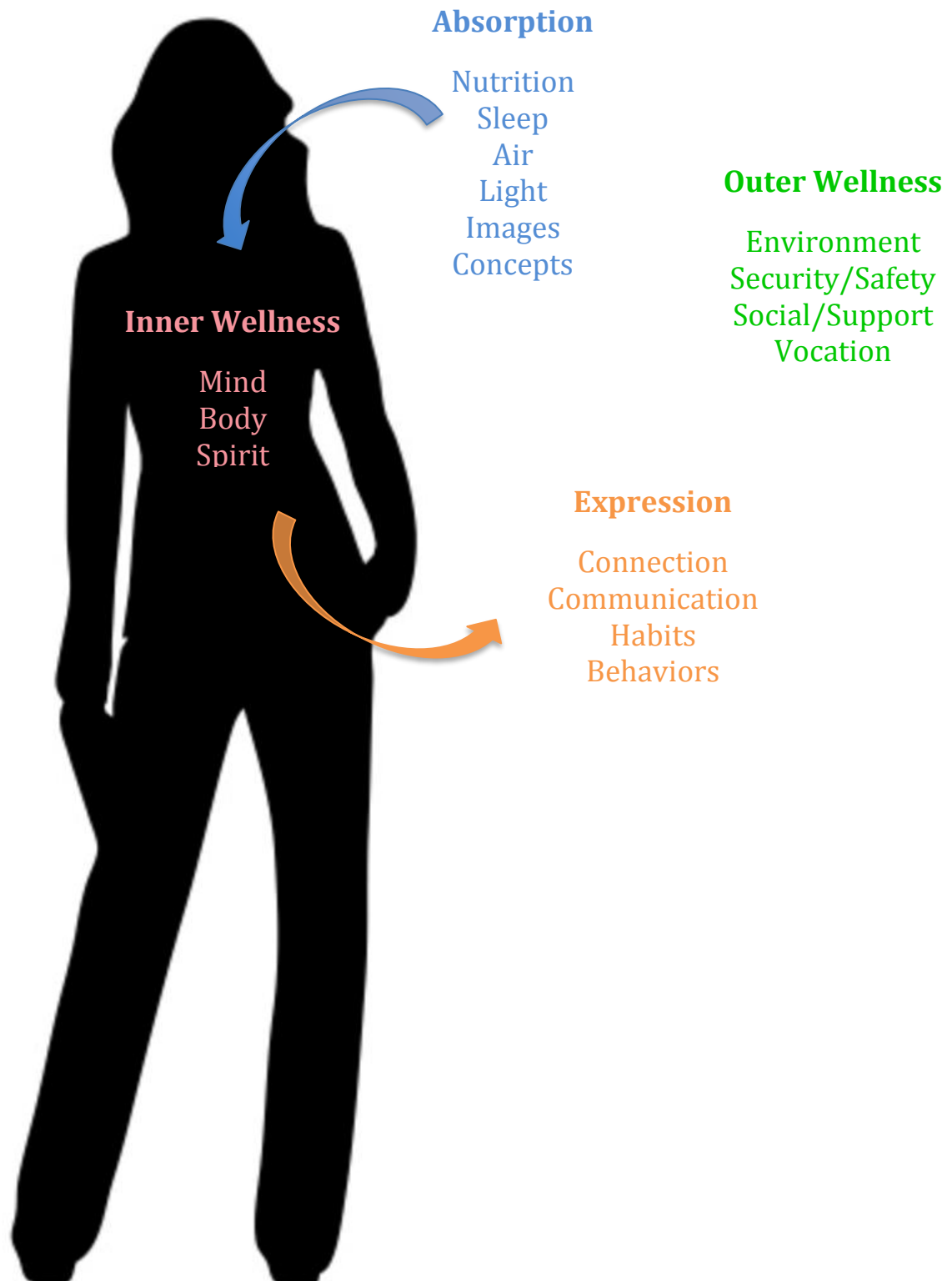


Figure C. Visual diagram of internal/external wellness cycle. Diagram by author; female silhouette image retrieved from <http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=57470&picture=woman-silhouette>

Appendix E
 Blog 1
 Enjoying the Exhale: Breathing in Creativity & Wellness

“Breathe with unconditional breath the unconditional air.” - Wendall Berry, *Given*

Life hangs on every breath we take; yet when was the last time you consciously thought about your breathing? Within every activity you do, breathing plays a critical role - from speaking and exercise to sleeping and nutrition. What is there to really think about? The body takes care of breathing through some ancient autonomic system, so why use precious, limited thought resources on it when you could spend your energy on more important cognitive pursuits?

Beyond the life-saving qualities of a good breathing habit, there is much more at work. It turns out that breathing is foundational to overall wellness in ways we may not have previously understood. Not only that, but deliberate, deep breathing also fosters creativity, decision making and other key cognitive and affective functions. Simply put, improving your breathing is one of the single best practices you can develop to foster your health and creativity – and here is why.

Body

“It is a common belief that we breathe with our lungs alone, but in point of fact, the work of breathing is done by the whole body.” — Alexander Lowen, *The Voice of the Body*

- **Increased Oxygen** - On the most basic level, deep breathing increases oxygen levels in the blood stream, helping to raise energy, cell survival and brain function, all of which support creativity. The way we exhale is actually more critical to getting the oxygen we need and should generally last longer than the

inhale.

- ***Metabolism*** - Oxygen is fuel. By taking in greater amounts, it charges your cells to function more effectively, improves digestion, and thus improves your metabolism. Increased overall energy means more resources can be directed towards creative endeavors.
- ***Sleep Quality*** - Deeper, healthful breathing while awake helps keep us alert and focused on important tasks. During sleep it significantly improves sleep quality, extends dreaming brain states, supports neural connections, and facilitates the clean up of toxins in the brain, bringing clarity to waking cognition and creativity.
- ***Relaxation & Stress Reduction*** - Deep breathing lowers cortisol levels, normalizes blood pressure and stabilizes body rhythms, all of which foster mental clarity, relax your body, and prime you for creative insight.
- ***Immune Function*** - Breathing is the best way to change the pH of your body toward an alkaline state that helps prevent large-scale disease. By expelling carbon dioxide from your lungs and breaking down salts, breathing is one of the most affective ways to eliminate extra harmful acids. Every exhale removes toxins from your body, just one of the many reasons yogis consider breathing a path to purification.

Mind

“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.” — Thích Nhất Hạnh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*

- ***Focus*** - Breathing is the primary mode of mental focus in meditation. By calming the body, breathing can increase the ability to focus attention, which is critical to successful problem solving and ideation.
- ***Awareness*** - Deliberate, deep breathing can also take focus a step further and assist the mind in expanding your awareness of yourself and your surroundings. Developing this new consciousness helps you take in new stimuli, clarify needs, and highlight priorities, all critical to creative thinking and problem solving.
- ***Managing Emotions*** - Our emotional states may be partially predicated on our proactive breathing patterns. Breathing is more shallow when anxious or depressed. Deeper breathing promotes positive emotional states and a greater sense of calm, both of which empower creative thinking through finding the value in ideas and focusing energy toward problem solving.
- ***Motivation*** - Increased energy from deep breathing directly impacts motivation levels. Motivation is considered one of the only commonalities across all eminent creators.

Connection

“I am never alone wherever I am. The air itself supplies me with a century of love. When I breathe in, I am breathing in the laughter, tears, victories, passions, thoughts, memories, existence, joys, moments, and the hues of the sunlight on many tones of skin; I am breathing in the same air that was exhaled by many before me. The air that bore them life. And so how can I ever say that I am alone?” — C. JoyBell C.

Taking in the World - Breathing is a very physical way of connecting with both our environment and others in it. As Alexander Lowen says, “we live in an ocean of air,” and so to breath deeply we immerse ourselves in our environment. Taking this mindful vantage point prompts us to immerse ourselves more deeply in our surroundings in other ways as well: noticing things we normally overlook, taking in more information, and making new connections that prompt creative ideas.

Rules for Breathing Creativity

- Go for depth and volume
- For all that you take in, push even more out
- Make it a deliberate habit
- Separate diverging and converging

Social Connection - Given that our emotions build on our breathing patterns, deliberate deep breathing may increase how positively we experience social interactions, therein leading to a more positive and less anxious mental state. An affirmative mindset is crucial to the ability to build on ideas and find creative solutions to problems. The social aspect of our environment is also especially stimulating and can serve as a wellspring for novel connections. Further, an increase in positive experiences may lead to an increase of social interaction over time, therein increasing personal longevity and lifespan.

Breath of Fresh air

Breathing pervades every moment of every day and is an incredibly healthful habit to consciously develop. Likewise, creativity is omnipresent throughout each day, and actively fostering the creative mindset expands the quality of each experience. Weaving these two deliberate practices together promotes personal wellness on a grander scale. The bottom line, in both breathing and creativity, is to stay out of the shallow end - there is benefit to getting in deep.

And the next time you find yourself waiting for inspiration? Don't hold your breath.

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Appendix F
Blog 2
Creative Survival: Wellness Beyond Work

Living to Work

We are modern. Fast, sleek, streamlined. We are edgy. Steel? Try titanium. We are competitors. Giving yesterday a run for its money, leaving last month knocked out cold. We are machines. Producing, churning, calculating in nanoseconds. You can keep up, can't you? It's sink or swim. Run or die. Sprint. Faster. FASTER. Anyone who believes this is a marathon might as well leave now.

Sound familiar? Pervasive modern messaging beaming through Western media is now permeating global culture. If it hasn't already taken over your company, don't worry; it's coming to a supervisor near you. And if you're not willing to work 24/7, there is a long line of folks waiting for your job who will.

What does it feel like to move at the speed of terabytes per second? Even the hardest among us struggle to breathe when this much G-force bears down. For most of us it's an unending dance, trying to maintain some semblance of balance between the breakneck world pace and our own private needs. When things begin to feel unstable we kick it into emergency gear to ensure things don't spin out of control. Problem solving at this point is pure triage. There is no time to think. Just stop the bleeding. Re-stabilize and keep moving forward. No time for retrospection to truly decipher what got us into that jam, we think we know and that's good enough. Just keep moving. Health? Sure, it's steadily decreasing, but I'm fine for now. I can take it. Happiness? No one has that anymore, why would I delude myself into expecting anything else? Focus? What did you say? Oh, yeah, sure ... just a minute ...

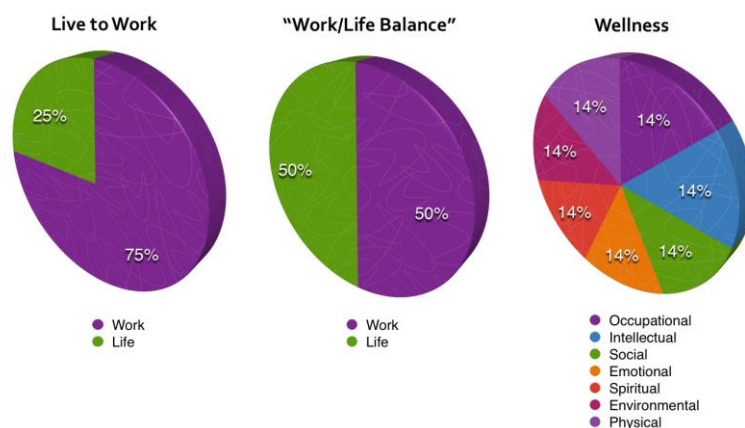
Facing Karōshi

Then from somewhere in the chaos comes silence. The realization that makes your world upend. Thudding so hard it knocks the wind out of you. You find yourself alone amongst archaic digital devices, drained of battery, and a flurry of papers. What happened? No matter what it was that knocked you out of orbit, it's a game-changer. There really was a limit and you tumbled past. It will be a long journey back.

Yet after the shock passes, as you survey the damage and look at things anew, you feel that pang ... you don't want to go back to living that way. Does that mean you've lost your edge? Lost your guts? The machine may continue to tell you that. Yet you know that it means just the opposite – there is a difference between giving up and saying 'that's enough' – this is a new level of courage. Many others in your position limp back into the fray to take hit after hit. But you've realized the truth. The better you are, the better your work will be. And while you're at it, why not make your work YOUR work? Why give up so much of your time pursuing someone else's dreams? You need to pursue your own purpose. You need a change. But what are the right changes? And how might you make those changes in the face of so many others going another direction?

Working to Live

Time to muster your courage and begin building a richer, more balanced life. The first step? Prepare for the journey by healing. Wellness is



a baseline from which all other functions come. To pursue wellness is to pursue the foundation of self-actualization, upon which creativity and other human needs rely.

Without wellness, other pursuits quickly falter.

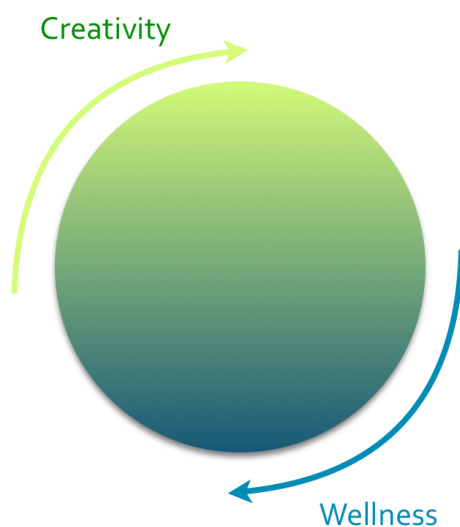
The tough question becomes *how* to achieve wellness when old habits are entrenched, social convention directly opposes your personal needs and support is scarce.

If wellness were easy, we would certainly have achieved it by now. The answer?

Creativity.

Kaizen

Wellness, like creativity, is highly personalized. Just as there is no single sleep schedule or menu that fits everyone, each individual's path toward understanding and utilizing their own creativity is also unique. What is right for you may not be right for others. This empowers you to customize your life to your personal needs with the ultimate understanding that when you are at your best you are able to contribute far more. Approaching wellness with a creative mindset helps convert the work of achieving wellness from a 'should' (meeting the expectations/ideals of others) to a 'want' (fulfilling your own fundamental needs). Applying creativity tools and processes such as those in



Creative Problem Solving (CPS) can be very effective at pinpointing the most critical challenges to personal wellness, as well as working towards more novel, personalized solutions. On a larger scale, approaching wellness from a creative mindset of openness to novelty, ability to build on others' solutions,

willingness to defer judgment, mindfulness, and commitment to investing resources greatly improves the likelihood of uncovering an enjoyable and permanent set of changes.

In essence, applying creative thinking fosters wellness, and in turn, a state of wellness promotes the strength and impact of personal creativity. Both creativity and wellness are cornerstones to self-actualization, fulfilling one's potential and becoming the best possible version of one's self. Both creativity and wellness also act as optimizers to set you into more ideal conditions for success in other pursuits.

Whether work is overshadowing the finer aspects of life, or another form of imbalance currently drains your resources, wellness is achievable right now in small steps. Using creativity, you can design a holistic approach to wellness that is manageable yet effective. You are worth your time. No one else will do it for you. This isn't a sprint. And it doesn't have to be a marathon. Call it a hike in the woods or a frolic in the meadow - either way, don't forget to stop and smell the roses.

* Karōshi is translated from Japanese as "death from overwork"

** Kaizen is translated from Japanese as "continuous improvement"

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Appendix G
Blog 3
Creative Convergence: Making Space for Wellness

Have you ever hit one of those points in your life when you're ready to move in a healthier direction? Whether its getting better sleep, moving more throughout the day or walking away from junk food, the realization dawns that **now** is the time. New Years' resolutions come to mind. Well, not long ago I reached that point ... and what I learned on my journey towards wellness reflected many of the critical tenets of creativity.

Pursuing wellness can be a beautiful, creative process. Inviting new ideas into your life often feels invigorating and meaningful. Yet since wellness is a holistic balance across many life areas - *physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, occupational, financial, and environmental* - achieving full wellness takes significant attention in each individual area, in addition to the effort involved in balancing all of them. It's an investment, but the outcome is worth the effort.

I was motivated! Not only did I want to improve bad habits (like not getting enough sleep), I also wanted to improve even those I felt were pretty good (like nutrition). It was time for a whole new look at what it meant to be well. Research and insights abounded! My free time was filled with everything from recipe searches to athletic classes to insightful chats with friends about their own wellness journeys. I used Creative Problem Solving (CPS) to identify, select, develop and implement new habits. I was on my way with immediate positive results! Nothing could stop me now!

Insight through Illness

“Let go or be dragged.” - Zen Proverb

Except ... for illness. Only a few weeks in and my body called a time out. Sidelined by a nasty cold, I knew it was not just the fact that it was going around. Intuitively I understood my decisions had played a role in compromising my immune system. How had I gone the opposite direction from my intention? Had I failed at wellness by getting sick? And so soon at that?

Upon reflection, I realized that in the process of attempting holistic wellness, I had diverged brilliantly, but had not held true to the principles of convergence in CPS. While I had converged on which new habits to add to my life, when it came to implementing, I had not converged on which elements would stay in my overall calendar. I had taken an already busy schedule and added to it until there was not a moment free. I even started cutting back on my already meager sleep schedule to fit it all in. And when my sleep habits faltered, not even all of the other positive physical benefits of nutrition, exercise, and meditation could compensate.

Luckily, in this instance being physically unwell did not reduce my wellness in any other area; in fact, it fostered greater wellness in certain ways. I had more time for phone calls, increasing social wellness. I spent more time reading and improving my intellectual wellness. The reduction in responsibilities lowered my stress levels and increased emotional wellness. It was a fantastic insight to realize that despite a rough cold I was really still mostly well!

Permission

“When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” - Lao Tzu

It was also surprising to realize that during my illness, I treated myself far better than I did on any normal day, even during a deliberate exploration of wellness behaviors. More startling still was the insight that illness is one of the few socially acceptable reasons to throttle back in our modern, fast-paced society. It takes significant courage and insight to prioritize personal needs and values over social expectations. This means saying ‘no’ even when it might feel uncomfortable. It was easy for me to diverge and say ‘yes’ to all of the new wellness habits, but it was much more difficult to converge and say ‘no’ and choose between the things I valued. That kind of everyday creativity takes courage. We are accustomed to asking for permission when we go against expectations. *‘May I please stay home from work for a few days because I am sick?’ ‘May I please substitute another option in my meal? I have an allergy.’* Yet the truth is that we need permission from ourselves to make self-supporting, affirmative choices - in any area of creative problem solving, wellness or not.

Creating Space

“The music is not in the notes, but in the silence in between.” - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

In truth, we are only able to enjoy the things we create when we have the time and space to do so. Wellness practices do not create wellness if they exceed your available resources. Experiences and information do not provide as much value without the time to synthesize and reflect on them. In wellness, as in all creative change, we require space to rest, incubate, and simply be.

One of the most critical aspects of wellness and creative change is building different types of free space. Space in schedules, space from demands, physical space,

personal space, social space, and even mental space where you are not required to think about anything specific, or perhaps instead where you are required to deliberately think of nothing at all.

Letting Go

“Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you - all of the expectations, all of the beliefs - and becoming who you are.” - Rachel Naomi Remen

In order to make space in our lives, we must let go of some things. As they say, we can have it all, just not at the same time. By embracing the power of the polarity between creating and letting go, we are more likely to have a successful outcome. Wellness practices exemplify this concept.

- Meditation and sleep, two habits that empower all areas of wellness, exemplify the fact that rest is productive in and of itself, and is required to make waking hours productive.
- In the realm of nutrition, fasting (according to medical guidelines) is a very beneficial practice for the metabolism and immune system.
- Breathing, a critical practice to physical and mental wellness, demonstrates that every inhalation requires a balancing (and ideally longer) exhale.

In mindfulness, three primary pillars are defusion (letting go of unhelpful thoughts), acceptance (making room for uncomfortable feelings), and contact with the present moment in a curious and open way.

Some wellness literature calls this type of letting go *decluttering*. While on the surface the concept of decluttering might seem to pale in comparison to something like

proper nutrition, the greater mindset is critical to wellness in every realm because it helps to create and protect space in life. In the realm of creativity, we frequently refer to this idea as convergence or prioritization. We empower ourselves to succeed by providing the resources we need to do so.

As we journey toward self-actualization, becoming our complete selves, fulfilling our true potentials, and letting go of the inauthentic pieces of ourselves allows for space to accept and embrace our true selves. As part of that greater effort, we must discern why we are wedded to certain expectations and whether they are worth retaining in our lives. Creativity and wellness are important tools to assist in doing so.

It is here along my wellness journey that I've hit one of those points yet again. I made some space and healed from illness. I made some more space and was able to permanently institute several new wellness practices. I felt the power of letting go. The impact of such simplification became apparent. Through it all, it became clearer that there is still more to let go and **now** is the time to do so.

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Appendix H
Blog 4
Directing Energy: Deliberate Intent in Creativity & Wellness

“Man is but the product of his thoughts, what he thinks he becomes.” — Gandhi

All matter is made of energy. As a result, the energy that forms new thoughts generates reality. Not only does it materialize ideas that perhaps never before existed, but it also determines neuronal growth - expanding or strengthening brain pathways. The choices we make about what thoughts we think are a way of directing energy toward an outcome. In this light, it becomes apparent how important it is to begin pursuing any goal with clear and deliberate intentions.

Intention

As processes, creativity and wellness are most powerful when they begin with intention. Within creativity, clarifying the vision, goal or problem at the outset helps to direct energy into solving or achieving it. Many of the direct and indirect thinking tools involved in creativity help to direct personal energy in specific ways. More importantly, the overall creative mindset is a choice about how we direct our energy; the choice to defer judgment or build on an idea.

A broad array of wellness elements also assist in directing personal energy – from the food we eat, the way we move, and the rest we enjoy, to the thoughts we think and the people we choose to interact with. Meditation and mindfulness, which pervade over all areas of wellness, center on exploring life force and mentally directing energy through attention and intention.

Energy Exchange

This life force, called prana, runs through our bodies and links us to those around us. Internally, the concept of chakras are energy loci throughout the body where energy channels intersect. Externally, Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious is a repository of shared energy, ideas and experiences. Experientially, all interaction from people to pets to plants to the atmosphere involves an exchange of energy. By exchanging energy with our environment, we become more part of it.

Energy movement involves balancing the polarities of absorbing and emitting energy. It is just as critical to consider what energy we take in, or are deprived of taking in, as what energy we are sharing outward. We are what we 'eat.' Wellness reiterates that we can deliberately empower ourselves simply by choosing supportive energy. Choosing social avenues that foster growth. Eating living food, which has considerable more energy and nutrients. Meditating on a topic that resonates deeply that day.

Deliberate Direction

Further, our intent helps our minds and bodies determine how to process each input. In wellness, one's emotional and mental approach to eating impacts how the body physically digests food. Eating proactively maintains the intent of eating at the forefront – eating for energy, nutrition, and wellness – as opposed to reactive eating in which consumption is driven by outside forces that may not align with the ultimate intent. In addition, energy naturally builds and gathers momentum along the vector of intention. When it comes to creativity, building on the energy of other thoughts propels the resultant ideas into a much more novel space.

Quantum Thinking

From a quantum standpoint, our energy holds limitless potential. A multitude of possibilities exist and it is our intention that determines to which path we will dedicate our energy. In creativity as in wellness, we have the ability to recombine ideas and build upon what is there in a way that highlights a previously unnoticed path. Understanding that many previously unknown paths exist frames our approach to seeking them out as creative solutions.

Our minds and bodies process and strive toward goals both consciously and unconsciously. As a result, by setting a clear intention, we maximize the personal resources dedicated to achieving it and increase the likelihood of doing so. Further, expressing an intention enhances this effect. By sharing a goal with others they may also put energy towards assisting you. In wellness this is clearly seen in the way that finding a supportive network or environment enhances personal wellness achievements. In creativity this is demonstrated through the power of group problem solving and the ability of a diverse group to consistently generate more novel and useful solutions.

Curiosity & Motivation

Curiosity is a form of motivation, an energy that is readily linked with creativity given that it draws people to investigate new things, absorb new information, and in the process make new associations on the way to potentially building novel concepts. What may not be as obvious is the role of curiosity in wellness. One study showed that “the degree to which people are curious actively influences their personal growth opportunities and the level of intimacy that develops when they meet someone new” (Donovan, 2002). By helping to foster social relationships, positive experiences and

intrinsic motivation, curiosity plays a crucial role in wellness.

Curiosity also plays a critical role in forming and asking the right questions, thus ensuring that energy invested in an effort is used most effectively. Curiosity-based thinking methods like appreciative inquiry, problem deconstruction and problem finding are important roads to creative thinking; however, they are also key to pursuing personal wellness. Curiosity not only assists in identifying needs, but supports an open-minded approach to trying new means of fulfilling them.

Well Being & Well Doing

Wellness is sometimes referred to as *well being*. Being infers a state of existing. But in truth, wellness actually centers more on *well doing*. Wellness is not passive, it is a constant state of change, adaption and action. Just like our body and environmental rhythms, maintaining and improving wellness is an ever-present effort. Wellness is not a plant you water once a week; it needs constant tending. The same holds true for creativity. Like strengthening muscle with regular exercise, practicing creative thinking skills strengthens and grows your abilities. By practicing creativity skills throughout each day and living your life according to them, they not only become stronger and more useful but they also foster wellness and self-actualization. Creating space and decluttering life is one of the best ways to ensure there is not only enough time for wellness and creativity practices, but also enough down time to process and grow as a result.

Wellness and creativity ultimately come down to exchanging energy in specific ways to obtain specific outcomes. Understanding more about our personal energy and the energy systems of the world may foster our ability to pursue both wellness and

creativity. Learning how to more deliberately set intentions and direct personal energy is a habit that is critical in wellness, creativity and achieving goals. The choice on how you manage your energy is yours.

“We either live with intention or exist by default.” - Kristin Armstrong

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Appendix I
Blog 5
Trusting Yourself: The Gateway to Creativity & Wellness

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.” - Seneca

What secret goals do you harbor? What wishes thump in your heart but remain quietly caged, set aside for another day? We all realize we have aspirations but do we know why we aren't pursuing them? What is stopping you?

Many of us are everyday creators, fluidly solving daily challenges in unique ways. However, as we consider larger-scale change, inertia can become much stronger. At times this can stall us from approaching change on our most important issues. During an effort to explore how creativity might foster personal wellness, this phenomenon came into stark relief.

Social Norms

While interviewing colleagues and reflecting personally on the hurdles to achieving the large-scale challenge of personal wellness, a strong theme emerged: while many were confident in their own creativity and problem solving abilities, implementing their ideal solutions often included an uncomfortable degree of bucking social norms. Two sets of needs were set in opposition; by pursuing personal wellness needs they risked compromising sources of social acceptance and support. The same holds true in creativity. Creators need support to be their most creative, and yet staying true to one's ideas, craft, creative methods and personal needs sometimes opposes social norms and thus reduces that social support.

Self-Trust, Permission & Compassion

So what is required to push people past the tipping point of serving social expectations in favor of personal care and development? Foremost, we require self-trust to feel intuitively confident in the direction we have designed. Next, we require awareness of our perceived limitations and the true results of breaking through them. Then we must grant ourselves personal permission to exceed constraint such as personal habits, social judgment and perceived limitations. While many seek approval from others as well, the act of acknowledging it is a personal threshold is important. Finally, we require compassion to navigate any bumps in the road along the way and honesty to see things as they are on the other side of the looking glass.

Hurdles to Self-Trust

“Hint: the cage is not locked.” - Nova Knutson

- **Confidence** - No one has a crystal ball, but most of us prefer to feel confident about our own decisions before investing significant resources or changing the direction of our lives. As hard as it can be to estimate how your decisions may turn out, even more difficult is developing the confidence to recognize what you truly want in the first place. A nuanced process like Creative Problem Solving (CPS) helps to expose the true needs at the heart of complex problems. In addition, the thorough nature of CPS organically builds confidence as we step through the process by ensuring you have considered the issue from many vantage points.
- **Perfectionism** - Don't allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Letting go of a specific solution can open you to even better possibilities and create new opportunities. Partial progress is much better than none at all and

places you in a new position to reassess the situation for new paths forward.

Assessing the priorities involved in a challenge can make it far clearer where to begin.

- ***Fear of Risk*** - Without risk, there is very little progress. Understanding risk and learning when and how to take it requires practice. Start small, accept a greater possibility of failure and discover what you can learn from the experiences.
- ***Fear of Failure*** - Complex problems often have complex answers with changing variables. No solution is permanent; plans are meant to change. Recognizing that you are committing to finding the right path forward gives you the freedom to pivot as circumstances change rather than remaining wedded to a solution.
- ***Lack of Experience*** - Trusting yourself does not mean going it alone. Sharing your goals and plans may invite positive feedback on your work and insight toward ways you can build your vision.

Building Support

Change is difficult. Making significant changes in an environment when everyone else keeps the old habits makes it even harder. Finding support is one of the best ways to facilitate change and solidify a new path forward. Sharing risk with others makes you more likely to make leaps you might not otherwise take alone and in the process build self-trust through experience.

Build Your Tribe - Use the hyper-connectivity of the modern world to your advantage. Find those who understand and share your passions, and work

together. Feeling understood and having support is a key to success in every endeavor.

Micro Cultures - Social norms grow from visionary changes that often originate from small groups (such as a few computer whizzes in a garage). By building a clear vision of the future based on the diverse input of your tribe, the momentum and results form a culture of its own. Participating in a micro culture can be invigorating as you experience traction for your greater vision and goals.

Ask - Others will not know you need support unless you ask. You may be surprised at the results. Asking others for input or assistance solidifies your commitment to solving the problem and invites an array of input to evolve your ideas further to be their most effective or unique. The vulnerability and honesty you share may inspire the same in return. The bond you build through partnership may last well beyond the task at hand. Finally, involving others also provides you support during a process of exploration and change, which may help you feel comfortable enough to pursue ideas farther and more likely to implement your outcome. And if they say ‘no’? You may gather valuable insight through that conversation as well.

Creative Risk

Building trust in yourself empowers you to navigate unknown situations, respond to unexpected changes and pursue your deepest aspirations. Without the awareness of your own needs and the confidence and trust to strive for them, your ability to achieve wellness and self-actualization will be inhibited. Giving yourself permission to take risks and deconstruct limitations opens the aperture of opportunity. Using CPS and creative

thinking skills are excellent methods of realizing what is stopping you from pursuing your goals, identifying necessary risks to reach them and determining the ways to take risk that minimize negative impact. Trusting the creative process is a path to trusting yourself, which is in turn a key step on the road to personal wellness and fully realizing your potential.

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Appendix J
Photo Journal Sample



THIS ISN'T THE BALTIC

JUMP IN

SOMATIC/MOVEMENT



FRESH START



MINDFULNESS/MEDITATION

BEAUTY OF THE PRESENT
EACH MOMENT THE ONLY MOMENT



SOCIAL/SUPPORT

VIRTUAL CONNECTION

ENTER, SHIFT AND RETURN TO FRIENDSHIPS ... WITH INTENTION



Appendix K
The Symbiosis of Creativity & Wellness

