

Wellness is the Urge for Simplicity

Wellness is a concept that has permeated medicine, psychiatry, and counselling in the past 30 years. We hear a great deal about the wellness industry, health & wellness, well-being, mindfulness, wholeness, mind/body. These concepts have their origin in holistic medicine, midwifery and Eastern philosophies. Generally speaking, the wellness industry is based on the idea of bringing people into wholeness through natural means, and is largely a reaction to the increasingly complicated, stressful and technologically dependent lives we lead. Wellness is really the urge toward simplicity.

Modern psychologists pursue wellness when they utilize 'mindfulness' to treat their patients, using meditation, breathing exercises, affirmations, or simple changes in diet and lifestyle, including yoga. In most cases, the 'spiritual' aspect of these disciplines is ignored as clinicians focus on measurables, like heart-rate, blood pressure, and metabolism. But all these practices have their root in spiritual disciplines. Even personal affirmations are simply secularized prayers. At the root of most spiritual disciplines is the desire for union with the transcendent, to become one with humanity or God. This simple wholeness is the opposite of complexity.

Technology was supposed to make our lives easier, but instead we are working harder than ever. We are always busy, distracted, stressed out, our lives are increasingly complicated. Modern gadgets designed to consolidate and simplify our lives have become our latest addictions. Devices that didn't exist 10 years ago are now things we can't live without! Has anyone ever said, "I want a more complicated life?" Yet, our survival seems to depend on it.

When we find ourselves off-balance, feeling fragmented, neurotic with constant distractions, we have that urge to zone out in front of the TV, go to a spa, or unload with an old, familiar friend. What we are really looking for is simplicity, the predictability of a certain and uncomplicated life. When we seek wellness, whether through a practitioner or particular exercise or regimen, we are essentially looking to slow down our minds toward a simpler life and a greater connection with the cosmos.

The urge for wellness is the urge for a simple, uncluttered life where we find respite from a complicated world. We can't always escape the world but it's helpful to create spaces and times where we can foster wellness with the aim of carrying a bit of it with us into our daily lives. Some may embrace the spiritual aspect of this pursuit, while others will find peace in the sheer relaxation of it. In some ways, wellness has become the new word for Godliness. Who doesn't want to be that smiling yogi breathing blissfully on the side of a mountain when we're in the midst of downtown traffic or an excruciating board meeting!

The next time you do your breathing exercises or get that massage or talk to your therapist, understand that you are being that yogi on the mountain, shaking off the shackles of a complex world and fulfilling your urge for simplicity.

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