



## BOOK REVIEW:

# Sustainable Wellness

## An Integrated Approach to Transform Your Mind, Body, and Spirit

By Matt Mumber, MD and Heather Reed

(250 words)

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The world has been waiting for this book. It is not just a support and self-care manual for living life in ways that sustain health and wellbeing; *Sustainable Wellness* guides the reader on an easy, steady and comfortable journey that makes the way going as joyful as any imagined destination. Research shows that making lifestyle changes can dramatically improve physiological parameters of health, but it also shows that human nature has the tendency to revert back to habituated behaviors, leaving our best laid plans for improving our diets, getting more exercise or taking a day off in dream land. How can we make immediate changes that are sustainable in our daily lives - changes that bring feelings of peace and tranquility to the mind, feelings of freedom in movement to the body along with more energy, vitality, stamina and feelings of hope, empowerment and purpose to the spirit? Reading this book is a beginning and following its principles and practices in daily life is a secure path to sustaining the way going.

The writers, a radiation oncologist and a Yoga therapist, call their program a toolkit – a perfect analogy because making lifestyle changes takes work: Grab your hard hat and get ready because the efforts this book stimulates in readers is more challenging than using a hammer or a chisel. The good news is that the effort invested in exploring their tools reaps immediate benefits. Matt Mumber and Heather Reed inspire our own humanity to build ourselves a habitat of health for daily living, one tool at a time. They are masterful at leading the reader’s consciousness and intention forward in making life choices moment to moment. Readers are elevated to expert and encouraged to develop trust in their direct experience. The authors call themselves guides and invite readers to consider an array of principles and practices for maintaining wholesome attitudes while happily avoiding prescriptive commands. The book is a delightful read because it is empty of “You should think this... feel this... do this.”

*Sustainable Wellness* opens with a forward from one of Mumber's early mentors, Andrew Weil, MD; a popular culture icon in integrative medicine for his many books, Weil's physician training in integrative medicine is a Center of Excellence at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

*Sustainable Wellness*, Mumber's first book, is organized into two parts with a lengthy introduction that encourages readers to pick and choose from these "safe and reliable" tools only the one's that resonate for them personally. The introduction places these tools in the context of today's health care system as integrative and potentially transformational medicine. Part I has only two chapters to set the foundations for beginning this work effort. In the first chapter, the authors define health, provide underlying concepts and introduce an analogy: a "three-legged stool of health." The authors identify each leg of the stool (nutrition, physical activity & stress management), identify the ground the stool sits upon (awareness) and the seat of the stool (spirituality), then move into a discussion of translational and transformational change. In the second chapter of Part I the authors lay the ground rules for the journey with suggestions like create safe space, be gentle with self, be an active participant.

Part II contains the eight steps to health that characterize the *Sustainable Wellness* program – each gets its own chapter and each is examined from a specifically described integrative perspective looking from what the authors call "the filters of experience - the lens of self, of culture, and of the natural world." These eight steps include mindfulness, know thyself, life review & planning, nutrition, physical activity, stress management, spirituality, and putting it all together.

Common sense analogies drive ideas home not with a rivet gun but with a bolt of awareness and insight. We are taken in with images of planting seeds in a garden in some places and later we conceptualize municipal septic systems. The language is clear and precise. Some people might call their ideas simplistic, but, really, the deep and profound ideas in *Sustainable Wellness* are presented in simple terms using the lowest common denominators to distill things to a digestible essence. Because readers are held in respect and even in reverence an excitement generates in reading as they become aware of the possibilities in life. This excitement has sustaining power to motivate the transformations and maintain the practical, every day changes that support health.

Mumber & Reed do exactly what they say they will – deliver safe and reliable techniques. Indeed, as they say, "the practices described combine a focus on personal transformation through lifestyle choices with the use of health promoting tools." This book offers a significant contribution to health care at a time in this country when change is essential, individually and nationally. The Supreme Court has just recognized the Affordable Health Care Act. Change is coming: We are in a climate that demands awareness, attention and action. May this book serve as a guide so that our direction and our actions support the best health and wellbeing for all.