



WOMEN IN WELLNESS  
*Be Bold, Brave & Brilliant*

*Ten Essentials  
for  
Wellness*

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As a universal principle's wellness educator, Cara Michele talks to groups and develops workshops discussing women's health and wellness, how Eastern and Western medicines complement one another, the conscious cultivation of personal power, and the skills needed to navigate life's changes.

Cara Michele offers free consultations to any woman who would like to explore how Women in Wellness can help them live the life of their dreams. Contact her to schedule your free consultation!

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## *Introduction: Ease*

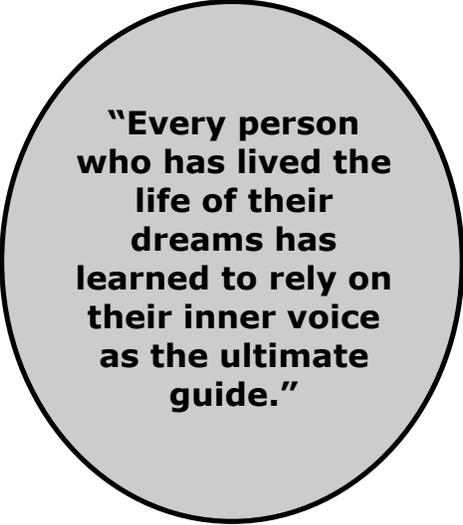
Ease was the name of the first newsletter that I created when I was still in graduate school at Tai Sophia Institute for the Healing Arts. I never thought twice about whether or not I should write that newsletter. Even though I had never attempted one before and I was scared, I felt the motivation coming from within and decided to go for it.

As I look back on that experience, the most striking element of it is that once I decided to accept the challenge, the people I needed to show me how to do it suddenly came forward. My partner reminded me that she had played an important role in producing a newsletter in her previous career. Knowledgeable people at school revealed that they and other experienced friends would also be happy to help me.

Life is a rhythm of ups and downs and mine has been no exception. I have been pushed and pulled in many different directions by well meaning (and sometimes not so well meaning) external forces, and often felt like a willow branch being whipped about and stripped of my leaves by the winds of a hurricane. These days I feel more like a tall, full oak tree. I know who I am and I can stand firmly and solidly in that. I am willingly stretching myself outward with the intention of providing cover and shade for others to rest, discover themselves and then grow to their full potential. The solidity and clarity that I have now has come from the one skill that I have cultivated for many years - the same skill that let me begin that newsletter when I was in school -

- the ability to listen to my inner voice and live by its message.

Graduate school is now well behind me, and I've learned to have more confidence in both my writing skills and my inner voice. I thought it would be good to share some thoughts that might help other women who are on the journey toward learning to hear and listen to the inner voice that will be their - YOUR - true guide to happiness in life.



**"Every person who has lived the life of their dreams has learned to rely on their inner voice as the ultimate guide."**

This is a collection of ideas and principles that have made an enormous difference in my life and the lives of countless other successful women. These pages offer concrete ways to create the life you truly want for yourself: a life of ease and wellness; a life of joy and fulfillment; a life of creativity and exploration. It is my hope that the following words ignite hidden passions and elicit new understandings that open doors previously closed to you.

The one thing that you must first do is to *decide* that your inner voice IS your true guide. That little voice is the combination of your earthly wisdom and universal higher power speaking as one. Please don't confuse your inner voice with the thoughts that come from the multitude of external experiences and influences that you've had in life. Those thoughts are not your inner voice, although at first it may be hard to recognize the distinction. Your inner voice is a deep energetic knowing. Every person who has lived the life of their dreams has come to the realization that they must consciously shape their own lives. They learned to rely on their inner voice as the ultimate guide.

We will always make mistakes. The goal is not to NOT make mistakes, but to make our own mistakes and find our own ways to address them. Relying on other people to direct you through your life is like riding shotgun in a car. If you're not driving, you don't know how you've gotten where you are. When you are driving and paying attention to the route you have taken, it's much easier to turn around and get back on course when necessary.

My wish is that you read the tips offered in this book and see how they resonate with your inner voice - your true guide. I would like to thank you for accepting my support and encouragement on your journey. And on behalf of the multitude of others whose lives you touch, I thank you for taking the time to care for yourself as you allow your inner voice and beauty to shine.

## *Tip #1: Relax*

It is important first of all to be in a relaxed state of mind. This will help with focus on your goals and will help make your direction clearer. There are a number of good ways to relax. Some people enjoy listening to music or sounds of nature. Others sit silently in the sun and yet others find their relaxation in movements of self-expression like dance.

Long-term, chronic stress does not only impair your happiness, but can be a contributor to many diseases and ailments. Scientific studies have proven that stress actually changes the function of our bodies down to the cellular level.



Adrenaline and cortisol are stress hormones designed to get you moving fast when there is danger. The same hormones are released when you are stressed. Being in a stressed state for prolonged periods of time sustains the

release of adrenaline, which keeps your heart rate and blood pressure high. Extended release of cortisol increases the sugar in your blood stream and alters your immune system, digestive system and reproductive system.

Finding a way to intentionally relax can change your life. If nothing else, sit quietly for 15 minutes each day and allow yourself to dream about something that makes you happy. Your immune system will be stronger and you will be better equipped to deal with life's challenges.

## *Tip #2: See the opportunities around you!*

The real voyage  
of discovery  
consists not in  
seeking new  
landscapes  
but in having  
new eyes.

Marcel Proust

Opportunities to create what you desire are all around you right now. They are like shadows. Occasionally they are right in front of us and easy to see, but the rest of the time they are off to the side or behind us and we have to intentionally turn and look for them. Opportunities may come in many forms: people you meet, places you visit, things you see. They can be obvious or obscure. What matters is your awareness of them.

Seeing the opportunity is often the tricky part. You see, preparation and opportunity go hand-in-hand. Their relationship is like that of the Yin and Yang, independent and dependent simultaneously. Opportunities will often only become noticeable when you have prepared enough to see them and handle them. When you have become the authority in your own life, you will know what kind of opportunities you're looking for. Opportunities are the building blocks you need to create the life journey you really want for yourself.



## ***Tip #3: Decide to have the life you want***

I believe that the most powerful thing in the world is a made-up mind. The first thing that Meryl Streep needed to do before becoming a world famous actress was to *decide* that she really wanted to be a world famous actress. In order for Madeline Albright to become the first woman to hold the position of U.S. Secretary of State, she had to *decide* that she wanted to have the credentials of a top government official. The same is true for so many of the women we all look up to and admire. To have the life you dream of, you must *decide* that it's okay for you to have it and *decide* to make it happen.

You may have a lot of reasons why you believe the things you wanted haven't come to you. Money, time, knowledge and support are some of the reasons that I hear most often. When I ask how committed a person is to achieving her goals, I often find out that she is not committed at all. Many women say they want to have the life of their dreams, but they haven't truly decided that they are going to make it happen *no matter what*.

When you truly make up your mind to do something, you become extremely focused on getting it done. You are passionate about it and you take action. You put everything else out of your mind and only focus on the specific goal at hand. That's the power of focus that comes from truly making a decision.

It is impossible for anyone else to give you what you really desire for your life. You are the only one who knows the tiny details that make life wonderful for you. You can't wait for what you want the same way you would wait for a bus or an airplane to arrive. Your dreams are not going to come to you of their own accord. You have to give yourself permission to be the artist or designer that brings your dreams into reality. The ability to make a decision is your ultimate power. You can't get away from making decisions, so make ones that will take you where you want to go. Decide and never look back.

The future belongs to those  
who believe in the beauty  
of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt

## *Tip #4: Have a plan for your journey*

Once you have decided where you are going, it is time to make a plan. Life is a long-term voyage, and no matter what you do, the landscape around you will change, time will pass and the people in your life will come and go. If you don't take charge of this journey, someone else will. Be aware of what is happening and where you are going rather than allowing someone else to do it for you.

What if you were planning a really long trip – a trip that will take years to complete through unknown even scary territory - like the ones you see people taking on the Discovery Channel? How would you prepare? How would you keep track of where you are and where you are going? The folks on TV start with a destination in

mind (your goal). They create a plan, check in with their instruments and trusted crew and make course corrections when needed. What “instruments” do you trust for your journey? What people in your life do you trust to be a part of your crew?

The women I work with not only choose to be awake through their life journeys, they choose to be the Captains. Like any good Captain, they determine their destination, create a plan for getting there and practice staying on course. This sort of control over your life is something you can have too, if you decide to.

First, you will need to decide what you want the end of your life to look like. What is your legacy? What

contributions will you make for yourself, your family, your friends, the world? Then come back to the present and envision your journey with that end in mind. What do you need to do today, next week, next year to get there? What people, places and things are important to your endeavor?

Start learning, studying and observing the things that successful people in your desired field learn, study and observe. How can you align your short-term goals with your current situation to make this achievable? By taking the time to think through your plans you will acquire a focused target that will keep you steady when something unexpected drops in front of you.

## *Tip #5: Be flexible with change*

No matter how much you plan, something unexpected will come along. It is inevitable. The challenge is to not let it become a barrier to your goals. Change is a force in life that you can always count on, yet when things don't happen the way we want them to or the way they always have, we have a tendency to struggle to maintain the status quo or force things to happen the way we want. In my experience, I've found that this struggle causes more suffering than any other single thing. Adapting to change, and adjusting our course to stay on track with our goals can be difficult but is a necessary part of life.

A number of years ago I started training in the martial art of aikido because of my own pattern of fighting with the changes in my life. I chose aikido because it is an art based on harmony instead of struggle. The aikido philosophy teaches that a combat situation is just like life. When you feel like you're in danger, you have the choice to create and participate in the conflict or to step aside and give yourself time to partner with the perceived danger so you can see what is really happening. It may sound strange to partner with a perceived danger, but the truth of the matter is that we often think someone is trying to hurt us when they really are not. Sometimes our “danger radar” goes off because of past experiences and not based on what's happening right now. Getting out of the way and having the intention for partnership will allow you to stay safe and take the time to see what's really happening. Once we see what's happening we can make the changes that are necessary, if any at all.



## ***Tip #6: Be grateful every day***

You always have the choice of seeing your life for what it truly is instead of what someone else says it should be. Gratitude allows you to see the true abundance and beauty in your life. Religions and philosophies have long embraced gratitude as an indispensable manifestation of virtue and an integral component of health, wholeness and well-being. People who are grateful report greater amounts of energy and positive moods. They also have a greater sense of connection to others, more optimistic ratings of their lives and fewer physical symptoms.

Get yourself a notebook or piece of paper and write down anything that felt like a gift to you today. Perhaps it was some encouraging words or a song that touched you. Perhaps the simple pleasure of the sun shining energized you. Do you have a house and a car? A loving partner or spouse? A comfortable bed to sleep in? Good food to put on your table? Be grateful for them and write them down in just enough words so you will remember them later. Do this for one week and see how it changes your worldview. After a while you won't

be able to miss all of the gifts given to you every day, and every moment will be motivated by gratitude.

Feeling grateful towards someone or something in your life actually attracts more of the things that you appreciate and value into your life.

Christiane Northrup

## ***Tip #7: Be generous***

As I see it, there are two types of generosity. The first is the type of generosity that is simply expected of us as women, mothers, wives or partners. We have learned that whether we want to or not, we are counted on to give our time, money, energy, ideas and even give up on our dreams and desires for the sake of others all the time. This is NOT the generosity I'm talking about.

The generosity that I'm talking about is the kind of giving you do because you want to – because it makes you feel good – because you know it is creating a positive effect on the world. When you give generously in this way, your spirits are lifted, as are the spirits of those you helped. This kind of giving provides you with actual pleasure. There are abundant op-

portunities for this type of giving if you are looking for them, and the positive energy you receive back is often greater than what you feel you have given.

Women are often better at giving than at receiving, but true generosity goes both ways. Being a gracious recipient is a form of generosity in its own right. When we allow others to help us at appropriate times, we are giving them opportunity to gain that positive energy, too.

Generosity can be empowering when approached from a broad worldview. Sharing what you have in the moment allows you to fortify your belief in abundance, prosperity and wealth for everyone.

## *Tip #8: Find an exercise that you like and someone to share it with*

After working with women for years, I know that the best way to create a new exercise program is to make it fun. Find a form of exercise that you really like to do or that you loved to do as a child. Did you ride your bike? Skate? Participate in a sport? Find a friend who likes this sort of activity too and you will be good to go, because even when you're tired you will still be having fun with a friend.

As we get older our bodies start to change in a lot of ways. It gets harder to fit into our favorite jeans. We run out of breath playing a simple game of catch in the park. Our joints and muscles ache after the simplest of tasks. To top things off, being inactive is associated with a whole host of illnesses, not the least of which are heart disease and diabetes. All of this becomes important when you realize that you want to be – need to be – healthy and active as you proceed on your life's journey. Nobody wants to be stuck in a chair on the sidelines, unable to participate in life. Your ability to stay healthy and active is a way to be generous to yourself and to others.

With a little encouragement to get them started, my clients have increased their activity levels and I've seen very positive results. Fewer mood swings, greater ability to control weight, an increase in cardiovascular fitness, muscular toning and increased confidence are all things I've observed after only a few weeks of regular exercise.

Let's be real. Starting a new exercise program means that you are going to get tired and may be a little sore. You will feel a little uncomfortable, but if you think of that discomfort as sleepy muscles trying to wake up you'll recognize that it is perfectly okay to be sore. All you need is a little bit of motivation to help you get over the newness of it all and that is when a workout partner becomes important. Grab your partner and go have a good time!



## *Tip #9: Be aware of where your food and water come from*

*"Visiting your local farmer's market or participating in a local Community Supported Agriculture project is a wonderful way to reconnect with your food and where it comes from."*



Another element to consider while getting yourself in mental and physical shape falls under the old adage "You are what you eat." This is more important today than it has ever been. In our attempts to make food faster and cheaper we have accepted shortcuts that are making us sick. When it comes to choosing our food, it is really a case of "pay now or pay later." Organic produce may cost more, but consider what you are getting for your dollar.

In my grandparents' time, there was no such thing as organic certification, because that's just the way farming was done. It is only in the last 50 years or so that our agricultural systems have become more industrialized and have begun to rely heavily on the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides for produce and factory farms for animals.

We are learning that many of the chemicals used in our food production have been found to cause cancer, and many more of them have never even been tested for their potential affect on our bodies. In addition, some of these chemicals have been found to suppress nutrients and naturally occurring antioxidants. Most of the animals raised for meat in our industrial agriculture system are raised inhumanely in factory farms, treated in ways that most of us are completely unaware of, and resulting in high levels of pollution in the areas surrounding the factories.

In recent years, many people have realized that this path is not serving us well, and have taken steps to make a "course correction" in how our food is grown. The movement back to organic, sustainable and humane agriculture is growing larger and stronger each year. This movement also includes many people advocating not only organic foods, but also ones that are grown locally. Visiting your local farmer's market or participating in a local community supported agriculture project is a wonderful way to reconnect with your food and where it comes from.

Remember, eating is meant to give your body the nutrients and minerals that it needs to stay healthy and strong. Look at your own table. Is your diet making you sick, or are you eating to support your body in being healthy?

## *Tip #10: Find an energetic practitioner with whom you communicate well*

Finally, I'd like you to consider the ideas that drew me to become an acupuncturist. Energetic practices recognize the relationships between mind, body and spirit as three spokes of the same wheel. If you are not feeling well on one of these levels then it could manifest itself on the other levels. My favorite example of this is an ulcer. After a few weeks or months of constant worry and stress, you start to feel the pain of your digestive juices eating a hole in your stomach lining. In order to get to the root cause of your stomach pain, you and your practitioner will need to make the connection between your worry and your stomach pain instead of simply treating the pain. Secondly, energetic practitioners know that true healing happens in the context of relationship.

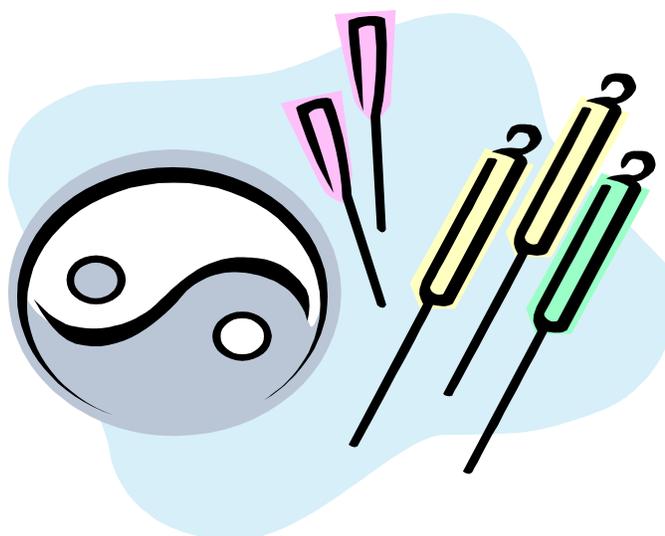
As an acupuncturist and lifestyle coach, I'm interested in creating a partnership with my clients, and collaborating with them as we look for answers. As the inhabitant of your body and your life, YOU must work with your practitioner to truly understand your current situation and the best way to implement your goals.

Oriental medicine is the oldest continuously practiced medical system in the world and is used by one-third of the world's population as a primary health care system. The study of quantum physics has demonstrated that everything on the planet, including humans, is made up of energy and is sustained by energy. Even though it seems we are solid beings, it simply is not true, so it makes sense for energetic beings to take care of themselves using an intentional energetic process.

The purpose of practices like acupuncture and other energetic treatments is to facilitate the movement of the life-giving, animating energy in your body. The Chinese call this force Qi, the Japanese refer to it as Ki and in India they use the word Prana. In a preventive paradigm, energetic

practitioners intentionally shift your energy to prevent stagnation or deficiency in your personal energy flow.

On a practical level, energy healing is an effective treatment for many physical symptoms. Organizations like the World Health Organization and the National Institutes of Health speak freely of the benefits that energy-healing offer to acute and long-term chronic conditions.



## *It's up to you...*

The self-help industry relies on the fact that we will not give the principles offered in the multitude of books, tapes and workshop an honest try. Our practice as a society is to buy information, try it a little bit, and decide that it doesn't work. Then we go out and purchase a new set of instructions just to continue this cycle.

I encourage you to quit this habit. You will never know if any of the offerings in this book are really helpful to you if you don't give them an honest try. Many of the leading experts on human behavior suggest that it takes at least 30 days of focused mindset and consistent behaviors to create new habits. This means that only remembering your favorite principles from this book every three days will not be enough.

Making excuses about how hard it is to change is easy and painful at the same time. Staying in our comfortable patterns means that we know what to expect. At the same time we're stuck and not moving forward. The real living comes when we dare to step out of our comfort zones and intentionally seek out the life we want for ourselves. Living in the unknown, while scary, is the only way to grow.

I look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions for this book.

In Partnership,

Cara Michele

Life is no brief candle to me.  
It is a sort of splendid torch which  
I have got hold of for the  
moment, and I want to make it  
burn as brightly as possible  
before handing it on to future  
generations.

*George Bernard Shaw*