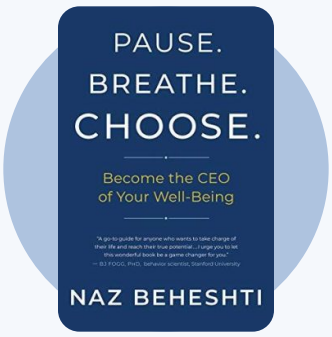


BOOK

Pause. Breathe. Choose.

Become the CEO of Your Well-Being

Naz Beheshti | New World Library © 2021 | 312 pages

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getAbstract Rating

★ 9 | Well Structured | Concrete Examples | Inspiring

What You Will Learn

- Why career success shouldn't cost your well-being.
- How mindfulness aligns your head and heart.
- How to manage stress with the Seven A's.
- Why connecting with others boosts your purpose.

Supported Skills

Practice Mindfulness | Become More Adaptable | Cultivate Flexibility | Live Well

About the Author

Prananaz founder and CEO **Naz Beheshti** is an executive wellness coach who has written numerous articles on the subject. She has worked for more than 20 years at *Fortune* 500 companies, including time with Steve Jobs at Apple.

Recommendation

When you prioritize your career over your well-being, you hurt both. By focusing on your well-being, however, you can improve your life, both professionally and personally. In this inspiring book, executive wellness coach Naz Beheshti explains how her MAP Method can help you restructure your life. It can make you a master of mindfulness and of the Seven *A*'s of resilience and stress-management, allowing you to become "CEO of your well-being." Using personal and client stories, Beheshti offers practical tips for how you can incorporate healthier habits in your workplace and in your life. It all starts with you leading by example, creating a culture that supports individual wellness.

Take-Aways

- Achieving your career goals isn't worth sacrificing your well-being.
- Embrace mindfulness as the basis for your life and self-knowledge.
- Using the Seven *A*'s will help you reduce stress and improve your adaptability.
- You can experience positive and negative types of stress. Learn to identify which type you are feeling.
- Learn how to change, accommodate to, or accept situations.
- Prioritize your connection with yourself, friends and family, and the world to solidify your own goals.
- To become your best self, seek purpose in your life, and use your pain to grow and your energy to be present.

Summary

Achieving your career goals isn't worth sacrificing your well-being.

The Japanese have a word for someone who dies from working too much: *karoshi*. This prioritization of work over health exists in the United States as well. People who strive in their careers often experience significant physical and mental stress. They believe doing well in their careers is more important than pursuing personal well-being. The reality is that you can do both.

> *"True happiness emerges from our authentic Self. The real challenge lies, however, in accessing our true Self, which often is buried deep beneath our stresses, distractions and spinning wheels."*

While working as an executive assistant to Steve Jobs, Naz Beheshti learned that the Apple CEO saw his well-being as fundamental to the state of his company. If you find yourself longing for the weekend, it's time to rethink how you approach your life. The MAP Method can help.

MAP stands for mastery of mindfulness, for the Seven *A*'s of resilience and stress-management, and for promotion to the role of "CEO of your well-being." If you can learn to pause and deliberately be in the moment, you will make better choices for yourself and your business.

Embrace mindfulness as the basis for your life and self-knowledge.

Often, you can understand something by its opposite. When you feel off-balance or stressed, being mindful can help you realize this and make changes.

You may think being mindful is akin to an inner sense of calm, but in fact, mindfulness is proactive in nature. Mindfulness allows you to boldly explore the unknown, to challenge yourself and act in line with your true self. In the current career landscape and within your life, the ability to deal well with change is of paramount importance.

> *"The Pause. Breathe. Choose. Method aligns our head and heart."*

When your mind is moving from one idea to another, it's hard to focus. When you find yourself struggling with "monkey mind," you need to stop and breathe. You may need to dialogue with your unruly thoughts, telling yourself that you will work out the issues behind your mental turmoil. You should not respond to emails when you feel scattered. Reply later, when you are in a calmer state.

Meditate daily, starting with just a couple of minutes and increasing the time over the course of a month. It can help to do it as part of your morning ritual. In time, you can employ the mindfulness you've achieved in meditation as you do any daily tasks. The goal is to use your senses, and remain present in whatever you are doing. When you are able to energize yourself and be present, you will make better decisions and experience improved relationships. CEOs from Rupert Murdoch to Jeff Weiner practice meditation, and attribute their success to this practice.

Sit in silence for a minute or two before you enter a business meeting, or ask participants to take a quiet moment together before starting. To avoid thinking badly of people, pretend others can see your thoughts. If something angers or frustrates you, determine if it's a true disaster or just an inconvenience. Usually, it isn't a disaster. Being mindful can help you view any outcome objectively.

Using the Seven*A*'s will help you reduce stress and improve your adaptability.

The Seven *A*'s – "adopt, allocate, avoid, alter, adapt, accept and attend" – stem from knowing your true self. If you use them, you will be happier and healthier. The first two *A*'s – making healthier choices, and ensuring you have enough recreational or relaxation time – are paramount for following the rest.

Changing how you live is hard, but Stanford University behavioral psychologist B.J. Fogg outlines three steps to make change easier. First, identify what specific type of behavior you want, and define your targets and goals. Next, determine how you might make the desired behavior as easy as possible. Third is deciding what can prompt the behavior. Sometimes this "trigger" will occur naturally, while other times you may have to create your own prompts. For example, in order to nurture a more positive outlook (the behavior), one of Naz Beheshti's clients decided that, every day, right after brushing his teeth (the trigger), he would write down one good thing going on in his life (the easy action).

As a business leader, you must be conscious of what your actions communicate to your staff, because they will mimic your behavior. Don't eat in your office, or work from dawn to dusk. Instead, model behaviors you want others to emulate – like going to the gym at lunch, taking breaks and accessing the company's wellness program. If you provide workshops on how to handle stress productively, offer healthy food options in break rooms and create policies to reduce after-hours communications, you will benefit your company as a whole.

> *"Physical activity in the middle of the day helps people return to work energized, happier and more engaged."*

Having time away from work to restore energy and balance is important. Schedule personal activities as you would work events. Sleep for seven to nine hours per night. Allocate time for employees to engage with their personal interests. Provide flexible schedules, and sufficient vacation or personal time. This downtime will allow employees to be more productive when they are at work.

You can experience positive and negative types of stress. Learn to identify which type you are feeling.

Being able to identify which type of stress you're feeling and knowing how to deal with it is important. Acute stress helps you jump out of a dangerous situation in the nick of time. If you let that increase of adrenaline become the norm, however, it can become chronic stress. Chronic stress can make you feel hopeless about fixing the situation, and it may harm your health. If you are always anxious, sick, irritable or withdrawing from others, you may be experiencing chronic stress.

Unlike acute stress, or eustress, which gives you productive energy, chronic stress provides no benefits. You can avoid chronic stress by changing how you regard the stressful event. The ACE Method can help you differentiate between the three types of stress (acute, chronic, eustress). The first step, awareness, involves recognizing the type and origin of your feelings. Second, change how you think of the situation by looking for new ways to deal with it. Third is empowerment: Act on the basis of your new perception of the issue.

> *"Worrying is like punishing yourself for something that has not happened."*

Create a Stress Action Plan to help identify whether the stress you are feeling is real, under your control and something you can change. Evaluate each stressful circumstance according to the three criteria. If the answer to each of the three questions is no, then you need to cross it off your mental list because it's out of your control. An example: awaiting medical results. If the stress is from a past event, remember you can only change your present actions.

If an issue is something that you can deal with, develop a plan of action. If you have too much work, perhaps you can delegate or reprioritize tasks. Checking in with yourself during the day can also help. Pay attention to your breathing, posture and facial expression, as well as what you're thinking and feeling. This simple practice can remind you to stay present in the moment.

Learn how to change, accommodate to, or accept situations.

If you have a problem you can't avoid, you need to change how you think about it. You must either be flexible enough to persevere, or accept that it's out of your control.

You can change your view of a problem by breaking it down into smaller pieces. When you act on even a small part of the main issue, you will feel more hopeful. Each action you take will give you momentum. Listen to your Inner Coach, which is supportive and positive, instead of your Inner Critic.

Like an earthquake-proof building, being flexible can help you weather trying circumstances. Embracing adaptability opens you to learn what the situation can teach you. It is your choice whether you focus on the positive or negative aspects of a given situation. CEOs and staff both benefit from approaching issues with flexibility. Change is inevitable. Learning how to handle change, in life and at work, will improve your well-being.

> *"Choose to focus on what you can control because that is where energy flows."*

If an issue is indeed out of your control, you need to accept that it's something you can't change. Acknowledging this fact will help you move past your anger or frustration. Although you can't control most things outside of yourself, you can control how you think about a situation and what you do. Take the time to center yourself and move forward in a positive way.

Prioritize your connection with yourself, friends and family, and the world to solidify your own goals.

If you want to act as the "CEO of your well-being," you need to spend time connecting with yourself, friends, family and others in the world. It's difficult to connect with your inner self when you're overly busy or when technology distracts you. When you have a moment of downtime, don't seek entertainment. Boredom can generate creativity and self-knowledge.

Create a morning meditation ritual to cultivate a calmer mind. When you stop filling every moment with activity, you will increase your serenity, sense of direction and focus. This connection with yourself is the start to connecting with others.

> *"If we want to see change in the world, we must start with our Self."*

Connecting with family and friends includes people at work. LinkedIn found that globally, almost half of employees are happier when they enjoy good relationships at work. As a leader, you can support positive relationships by bringing departments together for a project or a friendly competition.

When you connect with others, ensure that you listen to them with an empathetic and curious mind to build stronger bonds.

Companies can also support employee volunteer work. Salesforce, Cisco and American Express are only a few of the many companies that give employees at least five days per year to

volunteer. Volunteering, whether in your community or in the world, will strengthen your sense of purpose and broaden your understanding.

Connecting to "the universe," whether through religious or agnostic means, helps you know that wherever you are is where you should be. This connection improves your belief in your core sense of self.

To become your best self, seek purpose in your life, and use your pain to grow and your energy to be present.

Everyone alive has experienced some type of pain, but how you handle and learn from that pain makes all the difference. Similarly, your *prana* – a Sanskrit word for "breath and life force" – provides you the energy to pursue your goals. Defining a purpose for your life gives you the focus that allows you to reach your goals.

Physical or mental pain can either spark negativity or shock you into meaningful change. Be aware when you are feeling pain. Learn how to deal with it, and use it as a catalyst for growth. Part of moving forward is learning to forgive those who have harmed you, which will free you from carrying the pain.

> *"We become stronger in our mind and our heart when we turn our pain into growth."*

This approach to pain applies in business as well. Identify your customers' pain points and find solutions for those issues. If you're unsure what problems your customers face, work to identify those key elements.

To help clarify your thoughts and goals, use your "*prana* flow state." Research proves how breathing practices and yoga can improve your quality of life and health. To engage and unblock your *prana*, stop all activity, take a conscious breath and reflect on the calmness you feel. Then, make a choice.

Incorporating a breathing practice into your daily life will boost your energy and allow you to be more present in your life. When you feel grounded, you can pursue a sense of purpose in your life. Stanford University found that the most satisfied people are those who give to others and feel purpose in their work. In a related study, when employees think their work is meaningful, they feel happier at their jobs, stay longer at their companies, and are more involved.

Just as companies have mission statements, you can define one for your life. To create your mission statement, think of how you would like to feel daily. Ponder your values, your strengths, and what inspires you. Dig into the reasons behind your thoughts.

All of these elements together will help you become the best person that you can be.

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