

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

## FARM BOY TO FLOW STATE

BY ALLEN GEE

I laugh at myself sometimes as I'm talking to my patients about nutrition and mindfulness given my background as a Nebraska farm boy. I typically preface the conversation with the statement that it is extremely difficult and challenging for me say out loud "corn fed Nebraska beef, mashed potatoes and sweetcorn is not a good meal for you to be eating." Nutrition and mindfulness were not something that was acknowledged or even thought of when and where I grew up.

My parents were trying to make a living and raise their family as they had been taught by their parents and their grandparents. We raised crops and cattle, raised a garden and did our own butchering. Lots of fried food and GRAVY! We lived near a small farming community dominated by an aggressive, ethically challenged family company and being at odds with this entity created significant social stressors. This was but one adverse childhood experience I lived but didn't have the vocabulary to understand at the time. The physiological impacts of this experience eventually manifested in a hospital stay and evaluations without identifying any diseases. In college, I took a physiology of behavior course. This class started teaching me that vocabulary and I began to understand my own experiences and its effects. As Walter Cannon wrote, "a twig is bent" and so it was for me. This interest led to my PhD in PsychoNeuroimmunology and a clinical practice of NeuroHealth.

As I have developed a deeper understanding as well as changed my own lifestyle, I have found NeuroHealth does make a significant difference for me. Turns out I am probably lactose intolerant, and wow, I feel better if I don't eat dairy. I've eliminated peanuts and the recurrent skin rashes on my legs have gone away. I've cut down on processed carbohydrates and I think more clearly. I limit my industrialized meat intake and my physical performance has improved.

I am more aware and more intentional with mindfulness and make a daily effort or practice to check in and calm the mind. I find my "Flow" (I was fortunate to have had insightful conversations with Dr. Csikszentmihalyi in the early 90s). My favorite way to Flow is mountain biking. The challenge of speed and technical skill with a high price for failure quickly and completely focuses my attention to the moment in a way that road biking does not.

In addition to quality sleep and movement, I encourage everyone to improve your diet and find your Flow!



### FRONTIER WELLNESS TIP

## INTEGRATION WORK

Integrate comes from the Latin *integrare*, which means to make whole. The question, and invitation, with integration work is how do you make the work and your life your own? How do you make the books you read, the appointments you have, the classes you take, yours? What do you do to belong to yourself? How do you take the knowledge, insight and information you come across day to day and make it something you can access, remember, and live? How do you take something important and let it sink into your skin to the point where you live from it? How do you live inside your life instead of just architect it?

Integration work is taking the time to figure out what practices you need to do to take what you are learning and embody it. Integration work can look like annotating, indexing, and researching the books you read. When you read, sticky note, underline, and take notes - do what you need to do to make the words in the book accessible in your life. Integration work can look like voice memos, phone calls with friends, therapy sessions. It is whatever you do to synthesize the inputs you receive into a meaningful, embodied life. When you learn how to make your life yours, you learn deeply about what wellness is for you. What do you do to make your life whole?

## LIVING VALUES & MEANINGFUL LIFE

BY REGINA GEE

At Frontier we believe talking about your values is incredibly important because this conversation helps us as practitioners and you as a person to understand what is important for you, and therefore to understand what motivates you. Being clear about what is important to you and why is crucial in living a healthy life full of meaning and wellbeing.

Brené Brown defines a value as: a way of being or believing that we hold most important. For example, community, freedom, and integrity are values. (You can [find a list of examples here.](#)) Brené says, “Living into our values means that we do more than profess our values, we practice them. We walk our talk – we are clear about what we believe and hold important, and we take care that our intentions, words, thoughts, and behaviors align with those beliefs.” At Frontier we talk about values because we believe being clear about what is important to you and why is crucial in living a healthy life full of meaning and wellbeing.

The first step is to name what is important for us. Once we have the vocabulary, we can start to practice our values and make more space to walk our talk. Glennon Doyle says bravery is about making your outsides match your insides. Living our values is about naming what is important to us on the inside and working to make our outsides demonstrate those values. Make no mistake, this is hard work and brave work, and it is what makes a life meaningful and good. For more resources on values, check out Brené’s book *Dare to Lead* for discussions, resources, and activities.

“The most important thing is to remember the most important thing.” -Suzuki Roshi

### WE’RE READING:

*WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE*  
BY OPRAH WINFREY

### WE’RE LISTENING:

*GREENLIGHTS*  
BY MATTHEW  
MCCONAUGHEY

### WE’RE WATCHING:

*FANTASTIC FUNGI*



### ILLNESS VS WELLNESS

BY REGINA GEE

Tara Brach introduced me to the idea of illness vs wellness in her blog post “[Radical Compassion: Part 1.](#)” She talked about how Hindu yogi Swami Satyananda answered the question of “what is the nature of true healing?” by writing two words (illness and wellness) on the board. He then circled the I and the We. He said true healing is found in the shift from I to we. I am intrigued by the presence of I in illness, and of we in wellness. What does this tell us about what is required to heal? What does it mean to move from a place of I to a place of we?

Johann Hari, in his book [Lost Connections](#) talks about how one of the ways to treat depression is to get outside of yourself. He talks about depression as being locked inside yourself and how you see the world. The alleviation of this containment is serving someone else. In his life, when he is in a bad mental place, he goes and does something for someone else. He gets outside of himself, and in so doing has learned to shift from I to we and from illness to wellness.

Lewis Mehl Madrona MD talks about how in Native American Spirituality, illnesses are not believed to be individual responsibility. Rather, the illness in the individual is a reflection that the community is out of harmony and balance. As above, so below. As outside, so inside. In this way of thought, the

individual and the community are one and cannot be separated. This understanding invites a way of seeing illness as a community responsibility, saying that I and We are really one and the same.

Mark Nepo writes, “When we heal ourselves, we heal the world.” In this poem, he demonstrates the connection between I and We; we are able to heal the world by healing ourselves because of the intimate connection between the individual and the community. Healed people heal people. Our ‘selves’ are not islands, and accordingly, we cannot truly heal in isolation. Once we recognize the We that we are part of, true healing opens. Moving from a place of I to a place of We is about recognizing the connective tissue of the world.