



THRIVING  
IN A  
**DISRUPTIVE**  
**WORLD**

The ABCs of anchoring, balancing, and clearing help us to be whole and sustain good work.

by Wendy Tan

**W**e run on a treadmill of work in a world of disruptive change. Stress is higher, workload has doubled, and job security is at its lowest. Many of us live our days off a to-do list that never seems to end. We get zapped of our time and energy, our attention becomes fragmented, and our productivity, health, and satisfaction levels suffer as a result.

Are there alternatives to this metaphorical treadmill? How do we thrive in this disruptive world and keep pace on the treadmill without falling off?

The opposite of fragmentation is wholeness—a sense of balance and completeness within oneself and the world around us. Wholeness occurs one moment in time to sustain our energy and be productive in our work-life. Interviewing many leaders and drawing from both Eastern and Western thinking helped me distill the pathways to wholeness to the ABCs of **Anchor-ing, Balancing, and Clearing**.

#### **Anchor to be Whole in Who We Are**

Anchoring keeps us focussed on what is important in the face of disorienting change. Our anchor is a sense of who we are and what matters to us. It gives us clarity, courage, and commitment. Knowing my anchor as an explorer of ideas and a mother helps me decide how to spend my time. I feel comfortable saying ‘no’ and dare to try new things.

We rarely give ourselves time to reflect amidst our busyness and can feel lost in our own lives. So take a moment to consider your anchor:

- Values: What do you value most in your work and life?
- Purpose: What is meaningful to you?
- Identity: Who are you beyond your job title and roles in life?
- Responsibility: Who or what are your core responsibilities?

These questions refer to you both as an individual and as an individual in relation to your community. A strong individual cares for the community and in turn, the community (our family, team, organisation, and friends) supports the individual. The focus of the 'I' and 'we' in our anchor keeps us whole.

### Balance to be Whole in our Thinking

After receiving clarity about who we are, let's turn our attention to the way we think, since the quality of our thinking determines our actions. "Either/or" thinking (aka compromise thinking) is common. For example, one either focusses on profits or people, short or long-term, career or family.

What does it mean to be whole in our thinking? The integration of two opposites produces wholeness. Just like how:

- Push + pull = movement,
- Breathing in + out = energy,
- Strategy + implementation = success, and
- User interface + solid technology = winning product.

The wholeness created is movement, energy, success, and winning product in the above examples. Similarly, a 100:100 ratio of career to family may for instance constitute fulfilment in an individual's life. The trick is to see wholeness as 100:100 dynamic balance over time, and not as a 50:50 compromise. As Mr F Scott Fitzgerald says, "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."

So to have wholeness in your thinking, consider one dilemma in your life:

- What are the opposites involved?
- What is created from integrating these opposites?

- $A + B = C$ , what is the A, B, and C, with C being what you would like to create?

### Clear to be Whole in the Moment

After achieving wholeness in who we are and in our thinking, the last hurdle is to be whole in the moment to take the right immediate action(s). In our scurry of activities and the frequent distraction posed from our smart gadgets, it is easy to lose sight of the moment, the person in front of us, and what is important. It could be interacting in a team meeting, presenting our best pitch, or simply listening to our children.

So we clear our minds to be whole in the moment. Just as a bowl is useful when it is empty, so are we useful when we empty ourselves of our judgements, egos, and mental clutter. We increase our capacity to reflect in the moment, to be aware of our impact, and to sense what is needed in a situation.

Consider these questions:

- Do you intentionally clear your mind in between activities? This could be as simple as walking to the pantry or pausing to take a breath.
- Do you start the day by jumping into activity like checking E-mails and phones messages, or do you take time to exercise or contemplate?
- Do you take time to reflect and listen to your inner wisdom that guides you beyond a 'to-do' list?

Putting the ABCs together: it helps to **anchor** ourselves in the face of disruptive change; **balancing** opposing ideas helps us find expansive solutions; and emptying and **clearing** our mental caches enables us to act wisely. These ABCs help us to be whole and sustain good work. 



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