

January, 2011

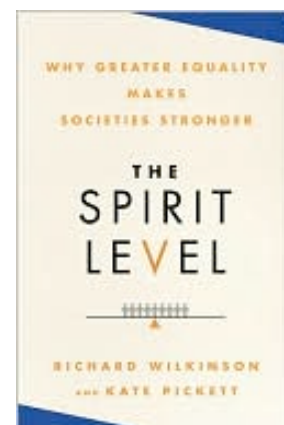
Volume 11, No. 1

BOOK REVIEWS

Wilkinson, Richard G. and Pickett, Kate. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury 2009. 331 pp. 26 pp. refs. \$28.00

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett bring us an absolutely fascinating survey of sociological research that confirms their hypothesis that when there is greater social equality in a society, the people in those societies are healthier and happier. Their discussion is drawn from numerous research reports that very consistently confirm their thesis. While one might expect such materials to be dry and boring, this could not be further from the case.

The authors start by documenting that despite the fact that many countries in the world today are richer in technological and intellectual developments, they appear to be less well off when it comes to assessments of happiness with their lives.



It is a remarkable paradox that, at the pinnacle of human material and technical achievement, we find ourselves anxiety-ridden, prone to depression, worried about how others see us, unsure of our friendships, driven to consume and with little or no community life. Lacking the relaxed social contact and emotional satisfaction we all need, we seek comfort in over-eating, obsessive shopping and spending, or become prey to excessive alcohol, psychoactive medicines and illegal drugs.

How is it that what we have creates so much mental and emotional suffering despite levels of wealth and comfort unprecedented in human history? Often what we feel is missing is little more than time enjoying the company of friends, yet even that can seem beyond us. We talk as if our lives were a constant battle for psychological survival, struggling against stress and emotional exhaustion, but the truth is that the luxury and extravagance of our lives is so great that it threatens the planet. (p. 3)

Physical and mental health are likewise not correlated with wealth. While increasing affluence initially enables people to be more healthy, after a point of modest improvements in people's conditions, to become richer as a nation does not automatically confer greater overall health to the average person in that nation. What happens is that there is a greater survival of children with the initial affluence, but then diseases develop in later life – in large measure related to people's lifestyles.

Masses of evidence support these observations. For instance, citing a review of 269 studies of anxiety in the US from 1952 to 1993, the authors note that "Together the surveys covered over 52,000 individuals. What they showed was a continuous upward trend throughout this forty-year period...by

the late 1980s the average American child was more anxious than child psychiatric patients in the 1950s. (p. 33)

These differences have not been generally apparent to most of those who have sought to improve people's quality of life.

What is striking in Wilkinson and Pickett's analysis is that it is not the absolute wealth of a nation that determines the levels of physical and mental health and happiness of its population. It is the distribution of wealth among its citizens. Where there is greater equality (or viewed from the opposite perspective, less disparity) in wealth in a nation, there is greater health and happiness.

The powerful mechanisms which make people sensitive to inequality cannot be understood in terms either of social structure or of individual psychology alone. Individual psychology and societal inequality relate to each other like lock and key. One reason why the effects of inequality have not been properly understood before is because of a failure to understand the relationship between them. (p. 33)

One might expect that the rich who are far richer than the poor in their own countries would be healthier and happier than the poor in the same countries, and that the greater the disparity in wealth the more true this should be. The opposite is in fact the case. The rich in those countries with greater disparity in wealth are also less happy and less healthy. These differences are also unrelated to material living standards or to governmental budgets for social services.

Because these findings are consistent within a series of 200 studies, confirming the value of greater social equality as a factor in promoting health and happiness, the authors then ask whether any causal mechanisms can be identified to account for these findings. " The search for a mechanism led to the discovery that social relationships (as measured by social cohesion, trust, involvement in community life and low levels of violence) are better in more equal societies." (p. 192)

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. If and when there is a better appreciation of the fact that earning more money is not going to guarantee greater health and happiness, then many of the factors that are driving our global community to increase consumption of natural resources to the point of devastating the environment may be reduced or eliminated. Quoting Robert Frank, an economist at Cornell University, the authors note:

Henry Wallich, a former governor of the Federal Reserve and professor of economics at Yale, said: 'Growth is a substitute for equality of income. So long as there is growth there is hope, and that makes large income differentials tolerable. But this relation holds both ways round. It is not simply that growth is a substitute for equality, it is that greater equality makes growth much less necessary. It is a precondition for a steady-state economy.

A great deal of what drives consumption is status competition. For most of us it probably feels less like being competitive and more like a kind of defensiveness: if we don't raise our standards, we get left behind and everything starts to look dowdy, shabby and out of date., has described how standards are inherently relative and involve comparisons with others. In his book, *Falling Behind: How rising inequality harms the middle class* (2007). (p. 221-2)

The consumption of the rich reduces everyone else's satisfaction with what they have, by showing it up as inferior – as less than the best. In his book, *Happiness*, Richard Layard, founder of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, treated this dissatisfaction as a cost which the rich impose on the rest of society. Rather as if it were smoke from a factory chimney, he estimated the cost that the rich should pay for it. (p. 222)

Pointed quotes highlight the fact that the authors' observations are not new, but have been the subject of comments by noted historical figures in many parts of the world, over many centuries.

I care for riches – to make gifts to friends, or lead a sick man back to health with ease and plenty. Else small aid is wealth for daily gladness; once a man be done with hunger, rich and poor are all as one.

- Euripides, *Electra* (p. 3)

A sad soul can kill you quicker than a germ.

-John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*

It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.

-Krishnamurti

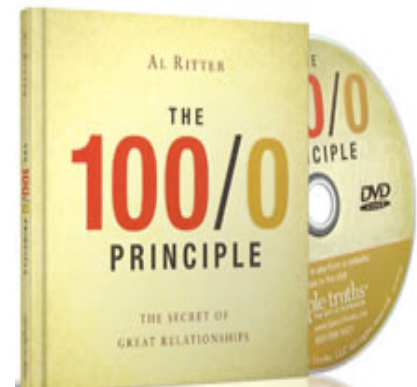
This book is a must-read for anyone concerned with wholistic planetary health and healing.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
Editor-in-Chief, IJHC

Al Ritter, *The 100/0 Principle: The Secret of Great Relationships*, Naperville, IL: Simple Truths 2010.

What is the most effective way to create and sustain great relationships with others? It's The 100/0 Principle: You take full responsibility (the 100) for the relationship, expecting nothing (the 0) in return.

Implementing The 100/0 Principle is not natural for most of us. It takes real commitment to the relationship and a good dose of self-discipline to think, act and give 100 percent.



The 100/0 Principle applies to those people in your life where the relationships are too important to react automatically or judgmentally. Each of us must determine the relationships to which this principle should apply. For most of us, it applies to work associates, customers, suppliers, family and friends.

STEP 1 - Determine what you can do to make the relationship work...then do it. Demonstrate respect and kindness to the other person, whether he/she deserves it or not.

STEP 2 - Do not expect anything in return. Zero, zip, nada.

STEP 3 - Do not allow anything the other person says or does (no matter how annoying!) to affect you. In other words, don't take the bait.

STEP 4 - Be persistent with your graciousness and kindness. Often we give up too soon, especially when others don't respond in kind. Remember to expect nothing in return.

At times (usually few), the relationship can remain challenging, even toxic, despite your 100 percent commitment and self-discipline. When this occurs, you need to avoid being the "Knower" and shift to

being the "Learner." Avoid Knower statements/ thoughts like "that won't work," "I'm right, you are wrong," "I know it and you don't," "I'll teach you," "that's just the way it is," "I need to tell you what I know," etc.

Instead use Learner statements/thoughts like "Let me find out what is going on and try to understand the situation," "I could be wrong," "I wonder if there is anything of value here," "I wonder if..." etc. In other words, as a Learner, be curious!

Principle Paradox

This may strike you as strange, but here's the paradox: When you take authentic responsibility for a relationship, more often than not the other person quickly chooses to take responsibility as well. Consequently, the 100/0 relationship quickly transforms into something approaching 100/100. When that occurs, true breakthroughs happen for the individuals involved, their teams, their organizations and their families.

As I said before, this could be the most important book you'll ever read. It also makes a terrific gift for friends, family members and employees on your team.

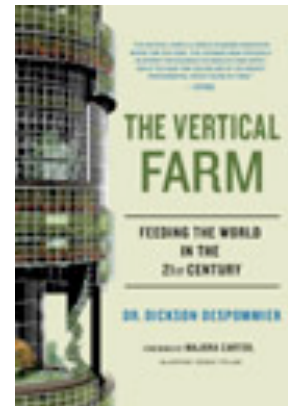
[See video](#) 2 min 30 sec

Mac Anderson, Founder, [Simple Truths](#)

Dickson Despommier. *The Vertical Farm: Feeding the World in the 21st Century*. NY: MacMillan 2010. 320 pp. \$25.99

Renowned Columbia University professor Dr. Dickson Despommier has the vision to change society as we know it. Lauded around the world, for developing the concept and championing the idea of vertical farming, Despommier now presents his revolutionary ideas in his new book, *The Vertical Farm: Feeding the World in the 21st Century*.

As we face the challenges of rapid population growth, climate change, and dwindling resources, it's clear that we need to find alternative sources of food, water, and energy to meet the world's ever growing demands for these necessities. Moving our agricultural systems into high-rise city buildings, says Despommier, would transform the way we grow fruit, vegetables, poultry, and fish, and alleviate many of the serious environmental problems we are currently facing.



Vertical farms will allow us to:

- Grow food 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Protect crops from unpredictable and harmful weather
- Re-use water collected from the indoor environment
- Provide jobs for local residents
- Eliminate use of pesticides, fertilizers, or herbicides
- Drastically reduce dependence on fossil fuels
- Prevent crop loss due to disease or pests
- Stop agricultural runoff

Despommier has been discussing the construction of the world's first vertical farm with city and national governments around the world, and vertical farming projects have already been under consideration in some U.S. cities, including Newark, N.J and Chicago, Illinois.

In the tradition of the bestselling *The World Without Us*, Despommier's *The Vertical Farm* is an important, original landmark work. With stunning illustrations and clear and entertaining writing, it is destined to become a classic.

The Vertical Farm was recently featured in the 40th anniversary issue of *Smithsonian* magazine. Despommier's work is also featured at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum as part of the *Why Design Now?* exhibit.

Dr. Dickson Despommier spent thirty-eight years as a professor at Columbia University, where he won the Best Teacher Award six times and received the national 2003 American Medical Student Association Golden Apple Award for teaching. The author is a seasoned public speaker, having addressed professional audiences at leading universities throughout the world. He will be speaking at multiple upcoming engagements, including TEDx in Washington D.C. and TEDx in Chicago. Despommier is a veteran of appearances on *The Colbert Report* and The Discovery Channel. He recently spoke at the TED Conference, Pop!Tech, and the World Science Festival and has been invited by the governments of China, India, Mexico, Jordan, Canada, and Korea to work on environmental problems. He is one of the visionaries featured at the Chicago Museum of Science and Technology. Despommier lives in Fort Lee, NJ.

Book Review Source: <http://www.verticalfarm.com/blog?108>

See also YouTube discussion:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cIRcxZS52s&feature=player_embedded

Ann Ambrecht. Ann and Terrence Youk. *Numen: The Nature of Plants.*

DVD \$27.00 95 min.

Winner Los Angeles Film Festival – best documentary editing

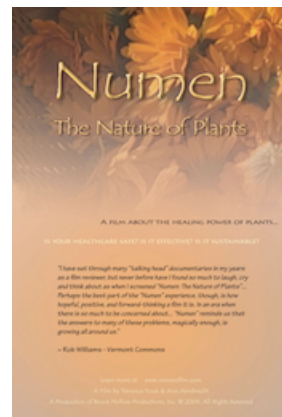
'Numen' is animating force of nature. I really like this film. It does an excellent job of presenting the healing potentials in (re)connecting with the natural world, particularly through plants, and with Gaia. The editing is outstanding – weaving together the words of many healers' voices in a harmonious chorus. The images are beautiful and the experts in ecological medicine and planetary healing are well worth listening to.

Included in this documentary are medical doctors Tearona Lowdog and Larry Dossey; the late Bill Mitchell, ND; author and founder of the Bioneers, Kenny Ausubel; herbalists Rosemary Gladstar, Phyllis Light and many others.

Quoting from the numenfilm.com website:

Numen will appeal to herbalists, gardeners, medical practitioners, plant lovers - and everyone else who is concerned about human and environmental health.

A primary objective of Numen is to bring the same awareness to medicine and the medical industry that the organic food movement has brought to food and the food industry. The film presents a sobering view of conventional healthcare and the dangers of environmental insults, as well as a vision of safe, effective and sustainable medicine. It offers stories about how



individuals have improved their own health and well-being and provides concrete steps for viewers to do so as well.

Most broadly, the film encourages viewers to think deeply about the sources of their medicine and how their healthcare choices affect themselves and the larger web of life. It inspires us all to deepen our relationship with the natural world and reminds us of the healing made possible by re-embracing our place in the wider web of life.

See also the list of contributors, including:

Rocío Alarcón received her teachings from her mother, grandmother and shamans of the Amazonian Rainforest and Andes of Ecuador. She was a founding member of EcoCiencia, Ecuador's leading ecological organization, and worked for over 20 years as an ethnobotanist in the tropical rainforests of South America. Rocio is currently living in England where she received her diploma in Holistic Therapies and continues to travel, teach and inspire.

Ken Ausubel is the CEO and founder of [Bioneers](#), a nonprofit educational organization that promotes practical environmental solutions and innovative social strategies for restoring the Earth and communities. He is an award-winning journalist, filmmaker and social entrepreneur whose books include *The Bioneers: Declarations of Interdependence*; and *When Healing Becomes a Crime: The Amazing Story of the Hoxsey Cancer Clinics and the Return of Alternative Therapies*. He co-founded [Seeds of Change](#), a national biodiversity organic seed company, and founded [Inner Tan Productions](#), a feature film development company.

Josef Brinckmann is the Vice President of Research & Development at [Traditional Medicinals](#) in Sebastopol, California; a Consultant on Market Intelligence for Medicinal Plants & Extracts for the International Trade Centre (ITC) of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland; editor of ITC's quarterly Market News Service for Medicinal Plants & Extracts, and a member of the Advisory Board of the American Botanical Council.

Charlotte Brody joined Blue Green Alliance as Director of Chemicals and Green Chemistry in January 2010. Prior to joining the Blue Green Alliance, she was the National Field Director for Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, a nationwide effort to pass smart federal policies to protect us from toxic chemicals. A registered nurse, Charlotte previously served as the Director of Programs for Green For All, Executive Director of Commonweal, and a founder and Executive Director of Health Care Without Harm.

Isla Burgess established the first four-year Diploma in Herbal Medicine in Australia at the Waikato Centre for Herbal Studies and has trained medical herbalists at the Center over the last 10 years, drawing on 25 years practice. She has presented papers at conferences and seminars both nationally and internationally and is the author of *Weeds Heal A Working Herbal*. A gardener at heart, Isla continually delights in the potential of unopened packets of seeds.

Dr. Larry Dossey is an internationally influential advocate of the role of the mind in health and the role of spirituality in healthcare. The author of nine books and numerous articles, Dr. Dossey is the former Executive Editor of the peer-reviewed journal [Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine](#), the most widely subscribed-to journal in its field. He has lectured all over the world, including major medical schools and hospitals in the United States.

Dr. James A. Duke, PhD retired from the US Department of Agriculture in 1995. He held several posts during his thirty-year tenure, including chief of the Medicinal Plant Resources Laboratory and director of the Cancer Screening Program. He is the author of numerous scholarly and popular books,

including the bestseller *The Green Pharmacy*, with more than 1 million copies in print. He resides in Fulton, Maryland.

And [many others](#).

The editors are to be commended for their obvious deep dedication to promoting healing ecological awareness – both in this film and on their website. For instance, they also include suggestions for [direct actions that viewers can take right now](#).

My only criticism is that the film feels a bit long, at 95 minutes.

Order your copy at www.numenfilm.com

You can also arrange to have a showing of the film in return for [purchase of 5 discounted copies](#) of the DVD, which you are free to resell at market cost.

Review by Daniel Benor, MD, ABIHM
Editor-in-Chief, IJHC

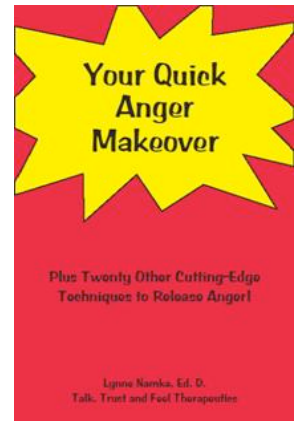
Lynne Namka, EdD. *Your Quick Anger Makeover*. Talk, Trust & Feel Therapeutics, Tucson, AZ. \$19.95, 226 pages

While I enjoy reading and reviewing books, I have had conflicting feelings in reviewing this book. To begin: the title, *Your Quick Anger Makeover*, is a misnomer. Anger and its variations (rage, resentment, irritation, annoyance, upsets...) tend to be chronic, deep-seated patterns of perceiving/thinking/judging/feeling/acting. In my own experience as a recovering 'angerholic,' there is nothing 'quick' about getting over anger. Secondly, the definition of the term 'makeover' is 'a transformation or remodeling of something, especially a person's hairstyle, makeup or clothes.'

It implies a superficial change or remodeling, as in changing one's wardrobe. While it is possible to pretend, and 'makeover' one's anger and behavior, I don't think that this is the kind of deep change that true transformation requires; nor is this (I believe) what the author intends to communicate. The idea of a 'quick makeover' does not do justice to the wealth of ideas, tools and techniques contained herein.

Having said that, I can now begin a more intelligent discussion of this fine book. Dr. Namka has devoted many years to exploring, studying and working with anger, in herself, her family, and her clients. She has written a series of books on the subject for children (and their parents), appropriately named and colorfully illustrated, 'THE MAD FAMILY GETS THEIR MAD OUT!', 'HOW TO LET GO OF YOUR MAD BAGGAGE' and 'PARENTS FIGHT. PARENTS MAKE UP. TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF.' Namka has a true calling for working with children, and for educating and disseminating information about how to deal with anger and other emotional issues in healthy ways. She established her own company, TALK, TRUST AND FEEL THERAPEUTICS, which publishes her books, and therapeutic toys for children, and has created an award-winning website, www.angriesout.com.

Your Quick Anger Makeover is a rich resource, bordering on a mini-encyclopedia, on the best ways to handle and resolve anger, from common sense to trauma research to cognitive-behavioral and energetic/EP approaches. Namka's writing style is breezy and engaging, ranging in tone from humorous and light-hearted to didactic, to passionate and encouraging (*C'mon! You can do it!*) The



book is full of checklists and exercises designed to assist readers in observing their patterns, and techniques to assist them in changing and re-working those patterns.

Topics include: Understanding and normalizing anger; emotional intelligence; the roots of anger in trauma, dissociation and PTSD; dynamics of blaming and projection; dealing with abusive partners; defenses and resistance; setting healthy boundaries; etc. Techniques she recommends include 'thought stopping,' examining assumptions and projections, challenging dysfunctional beliefs, releasing blame, taking responsibility, and of course EFT, TAT and EP.

Transforming anger is not for sissies! It takes consistent, mindful effort to confront, challenge and change the patterns of a lifetime. The title notwithstanding, *Your Quick Anger Makeover* is an excellent resource for those who are committed to making these changes.

Reviewed by John Freedom, CEHP
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