

Dr. Deepak Chopra Shares 'Happiness Formula'

BY BIANCA HEYWARD

On Sep. 23, on the steps outside Beverly Hills City Hall, Dr. Deepak Chopra led hundreds of community members in a guided meditation for the third installment of the Mayor's Mental Wellness Series presented by Mayor Lili Bosse. The bestselling author, pioneer in alternative medicine, and leading figure in the mindfulness movement discussed creating a pandemic of joy, overall wellness, and what he calls the "happiness formula." At the event, Bosse presented Chopra with a resolution from the city declaring each Sep. 23 "Deepak Chopra Day."

"We're in a different place now than we were these last few years, but I still feel that

See Chopra, page 11

Chopra, from page 1



Photo courtesy City of Beverly Hills

Mayor Lili Bosse with Dr. Deepak Chopra at the Sep. 23 Mayor's Mental Wellness Series.

many of us are still carrying so much of what we've been through," Bosse said. "And I feel that we're carrying it in our bodies, we're carrying it in our hearts, and we're carrying it in how we relate to one another...We've had to be isolated from each other, and I really wanted Dr. Chopra to give us tools for resilience, for hope, for connection, for love."

According to Chopra, the formula for happiness is $H = S + C + V$ (happiness equals the brain "set point" plus condition of living plus voluntary choices.)

"Unhappy people, no matter what the situation is...their first response is criticism, condemnation, complaint and playing the victim," Chopra said. "Basically, your happiness is determined by situations, circumstances, events, and people. And therefore, in a sense, you're at the mercy of every stranger on the street."

Chopra explained that each person's set point is determined by their parents, noting that if parents have a negative approach to life, a child grows up to adopt a similar mentality, which can result in growing up to be an unhappy person. "What kind of life is that?" Chopra asked. "Where you're at the mercy of every stranger on the street, every circumstance or every event or every relationship. By being a victim, you become a victim. And then that reinforces your victimhood."

For the past 30 years, Chopra has been on the scientific advisory board at Gallup, Inc., an analytics and advisory company that also collects data on well-being. According to Chopra, there are many facets of well-being: corporate well-being, social well-being, physical well-being and community well-being.

Chopra noted that thriving businesses have a shared vision, maximum diversity, a workforce that complements other's strengths, and an emotional and spiritual

connection.

"If you ignore an employee or somebody who works for you, as a leader, the disengagement goes up by 45%," Chopra said. "On the other hand, if you criticize them, it falls to 20%. Why? Because people need to feel that they exist. If you ignore somebody, for practical purposes, they don't exist. But if you criticize them, at least you notice them."

Chopra defined social well-being as having two or three people in your life who "will have your back, who will not judge you, and who will support you no matter what."

"And if you have even two such people in your life, you will be thriving," Chopra said.

"We need at least six hours of human interaction every day with other people," Chopra said. "And these days, even if that is text messaging, it's okay. If you send somebody an emoticon with a hug and a kiss, you will give them a dopamine hit."

The third pillar of well-being, physical well-being, includes sleep, stress management, exercise, mind body coordination, learning something new, relationships, and biological rhythms. As a way to measure physical well-being, Chopra posed one question: Do you have enough energy to do everything that you want to do?

For community well-being, Chopra said emphasized the importance of safety. "Are you feeling safe walking alone at night in your community," Chopra asked. "If you lose your wallet, do you think it will be returned to you?"

Chopra is a Clinical Professor of Family Medicine and Public Health at the University of California, San Diego and the founder of The Chopra Foundation, a non-profit for research on well-being and humanitarianism. Details on the next event in the Mayor's Mental Wellness Series were not available at press time. ●