

FOREWORD

When I look back on my life and how I've spent my time, two scenes immediately come to mind.

One: My kids are little. They're bouncing gleefully on the trampoline in our backyard, giggling and calling out to me, "Mom! Come bounce with us!" Over and over they call. "In a minute!" I respond, with, I'm ashamed to say, increasing irritation. I was weeding the gravel. The backyard looked furry and overgrown and I just wanted to get something *done* and crossed off a to-do list that was always so jammed that items seemed to fall off the bottom, roll around the floor and constantly trip me. I had a million things on my mind. I was worried about something I can't remember what now—something I hadn't done, or done well enough, at work; something that needed fixing, or arranging; some decision I was putting off that had to be made. By the time I looked up, the sun was setting, the kids were gone, the silent yard was still covered in weeds, and I was alone in the dark.

Two: I've decided to leave my job as a reporter at *The Washington Post* after nearly seventeen years. It's been a good run. I've done a lot of good work. Won awards. Made some difference. But there was a *lot* of busywork, too. A raft of forgettable stories done to please some editor or other. Less ambitious stories chosen in a panic out of fear that I'd be seen as unproductive or couldn't pull it off if I

chose a harder course. I'm cleaning out my filing cabinet. I pull out folder after folder of half-reported stories, story lists, tips, hunches, inklings and ideas. "That would have made a great story," I say to myself wistfully. Over and over. Think. And toss each folder into the trash.

I have long regretted each of those moments. I missed the moment in the first—my kids are teens now and, understandably, no longer want much to do with their mother. And I missed the opportunity to more regularly connect my everyday work with what moved my soul in the second.

And I suspect I'm not alone.

You don't need to go very far to find the latest poll, or study, or article that shows how so many of us feel as if we're drowning—in information overload, in overwork or unpredictable, erratic work, and in crowded calendars stuffed with obligations we're not even sure why we said yes to. As if we're living our own lives on the sidelines, watching them fly by, too distracted and frantic to fully inhabit them. We live in an era where long work hours, busyness, sleeplessness, burnout, the "work martyrdom" of never taking a vacation, or taking work along if we do, and the stress of overscheduling ourselves and our kids are seen not only as badges of honor, but the price of admission. Anything less and you're a loser. We get so caught up in the swirl of just trying to make it to the end of the day, running farther and faster, that we can often lose sight of just where it is we're going. Or even want to go. Behavioral scientists call that "tunneling."

That feeling, that we're trapped, endlessly digging in that dark tunnel, missing our lives even as we're living them, is what can jolt us awake in the middle of the night in a funk of guilt, anxiety and even despair.

That's where Christine Carter's *The Sweet Spot*, blessedly, comes in.

Read this book, and, like a smart, warm friend, who's read all the research, knows all the science, and who's been there herself, Carter not only explains why it's important to change, why finding your own groove and your own *flow* matters, but also takes our hand

and shows us the way out and how even small steps can lead to bigger ones.

I think I'd stayed up too late trying to once again clean out the overflowing email inbox that always makes me feel scattered and behind when I first talked to her about the ideas in *The Sweet Spot*.

She spoke about the power of “strategic slacking”—that neuroscience and neurobiology show we're wired to actually do better work and have more time for life when we get in the habit of taking time to first set our big picture priorities, work in concentrated bursts, take regular breaks, get a good night's sleep, focus on being grateful for what *is* going well in our lives, and instead of berating ourselves for not being perfect, embracing our imperfection with compassion.

She learned the hard way. She's a happiness expert. And yet she found herself constantly sick and stressed out. One day, she wound up in the ER and was seized by hospital fantasies about how nice it would be to stay there overnight and, at least for a while, not have to live her exhausting life.

“The irony was not lost on me,” she told me. “Here I was, deep in the research and methods of well-being, elite performance, the ability to sustain elite performance and productivity, *and* really sick. People would say, ‘When are you going to learn you just can't have it all? You're going to have to slow down. You're going to have to make some choices.’ Yet everything in my life was so hard-won, I just didn't want to give it up. I didn't want to spend less time with my children. I loved my career. Then I thought, ‘If I can't figure this out, nobody can. I've been studying this stuff for ten years, I really need to road test it all.’ I started applying all the lessons to my own life. I feel like I wrote *The Sweet Spot* so I could just hand all these tactics to other people like myself, so they wouldn't have to go through the period of getting sick like I did.”

She started small. Getting her addiction to email under control by taking it off her phone. Scheduling time on her calendar for her top priority: concentrated writing, and taking it as seriously as she would a day full of back-to-back meetings on other people and institutions' priorities. And, my personal favorite and something I use

to this day, micro workouts that are better than nothing: twenty push-ups, twenty squats, twenty sit-ups. Maybe a one-mile run. That's it. That's enough.

There are larger cultural, institutional, economic and structural forces at work that conspire to knock us out of our sweet spot. And big change can be glacial and beyond our control. But what makes *The Sweet Spot* so hopeful is that Carter shows how there are a host of things we *can* do to find our groove, and if enough of us put on our own oxygen masks first, we can help others do the same, and together, hasten that big change toward a more joyful, authentic and meaningful time.

And the most powerful tool for change, she points out, is our own mind. "Our beliefs have the power to change more than just our physiology or our health. They also dramatically change our overall happiness levels and our performance," Carter writes. Do we believe we can never change, that we are who we are? Or do we believe that we can, and that effort, not innate ability, is what matters in the end?

If we believe we can change, we will. If we believe we are enough, right here, right now, we are.

The power of belief Carter writes about so powerfully hit home when Carter helped inspire the Timehacker Project that I ran at *The Washington Post*. We matched people who were unable to find time for an important goal with coaches like Carter, had them work together for twenty-one days, and then I wrote about what happened. Over time, I found a distinct pattern emerged: In every case, no matter who the person, their goal, or their life circumstance, what had prevented them from making time for what mattered was the belief that maybe their goal wasn't that important after all. Or the belief that they didn't really deserve it. In the end, the coaching strategies for finding and organizing time were helpful. But only those people who came to believe that their goal mattered were able to finally make time for it, and find their sweet spot.

That's perhaps what has changed most profoundly for me. I have hope. I pause more often to check in about what's really important. I catch myself sooner when I begin to mindlessly head down that

dark tunnel. I'm still very much a work in progress. My sweet spot continues to come and go. But, as Carter writes, finding it takes practice. And the more we try, the better we get at it. The difference is that, now, I believe it.

—Brigid Schulte

Award-winning journalist, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time*, and director of The Better Life Lab at New America.

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

In the months since this book was first released, I've had lots of conversations with sheepish readers. "I bought your book," they confess, "but I haven't read the whole thing."

"That's great news!" I'll reply. Why? You don't actually need to read all of this book to get a lot out of it. And you certainly don't need to read it all at once. Think of it like a recipe book for making your life better, happier, and easier. Many of the recipes will be very appealing to you, others not so much. Your life is unique and your struggles are personal; I appreciate that.

To you I would also say: Please take the strategies I recommend in this book *one at a time*. Try them out and make them your own. But just like you wouldn't try to make every recipe in a cookbook (much less in a single season), you don't need to try out every tip or technique in this book. In fact, if you try only one of the hundreds of strategies in this book, you'll end up better off. Why do I believe that to be true? Because all the strategies in *The Sweet Spot* are science-based; they've proven to be empirically useful with large populations of people.

Here are some ideas about how to begin accomplishing more by doing less:

If you're struggling to "have it all"—like so many of my

readers—take heart. It is entirely possible to raise children well and still have a successful career! Begin at the beginning, with the Introduction (p. XXX).

If things are pretty good for you, but you are ready to make them even better—if you are interested in elite performance and talent development—start with Chapter 8: Making Hard Things Easy (p. XXX).

If you are exhausted and time-starved, start with Chapter 5: Easing “The Overwhelm” (p. XXX). You might also be interested in my free eBook, *How to Gain an Extra Day Each Week*, which you can find on my website, christinecarter.com.

If you are stressed, depressed, or anxious, start with Chapter 2: The Stress/Success Tipping point (p. XXX).

If you want better relationships—perhaps your friendships or marriage is suffering at the hands of your career or busy life—start with Chapter 6: How to Die Happy, Giving, and Beloved (p. XXX).

If you are having a hard time doing something good for yourself, like exercising or meditating or getting enough sleep—or if self-care always comes last for you—consider making self-care habitual. You’ll never have to will yourself to do it ever again! Begin with Chapter 3: Doing without Trying (p. XXX), and be sure to get the companion worksheets for your new habit from my website christinecarter.com/resources.

If you’ve recently been through a tough time, like a divorce or a difficult move, begin at the end with Chapter 10: A Short Guide to Getting Your Groove Back (p. XXX).

Above all, have fun with this book!

May you be happy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Carter". The signature is written in black ink and has a fluid, personal feel.

Christine Carter, PhD

INTRODUCTION: STEPPING OFF THE TREADMILL

We all have a sweet spot where everything seems to flow; where we feel happy, competent, in sync with everything around us, uniquely talented, and predictably successful. It feels like magic, but it's not.

—Peter Bregman

This book arose, like a phoenix, as an experiment in having it all. Could I fulfill my career potential and have a fulfilling family life? Could I be a great parent and still attend to my own needs? Could I be successful and happy without also feeling stressed and anxious?

Having studied well-being and elite performance for the past decade, I've long known what to do to be both happy and successful; after all, I coach people from all over the world on these topics. But to be totally honest, in my day-to-day life, I used to struggle to walk the talk. Five years ago, I was a single mother holding down three demanding part-time jobs, and my life was a blur. Yes, our family did find a way to eat dinner together most nights, and we talked about what we were grateful for. In some ways, I practiced what I preached. But in other ways, I was caught up in the busyness of modern life—winded, running on a hamster wheel, afraid to slow down. I'd lost my groove.

Life today is a pressure cooker. Even the most talented—and privileged—people are struggling to “balance” relentless work with family commitments, to manage a constant flood of information and emails, to cope with extraordinary stress levels. Only 17 percent of the adult population is said to be flourishing, fulfilling their potential for happiness, success, and productivity.

Consider this description of a working American's life, written by futurist and philosopher Sara Robinson, in an essay about the disappearance of the forty-hour workweek:

If you're lucky enough to have a job right now, you're probably doing everything possible to hold on to it. If the boss asks you to work 50 hours, you work 55. If she asks for 60, you give up weeknights and Saturdays, and work 65.

Odds are that you've been doing this for months, if not years, probably at the expense of your family life, your exercise routine, your diet, your stress levels, and your sanity. You're burned out, tired, achy, and utterly forgotten by your spouse, kids, and dog. But you push on anyway because everybody knows that working crazy hours is what it takes to prove that you're "passionate" and "productive" and "a team player"—the kind of person who might just have a chance to survive the next round of layoffs.

And think about the fact that: 66 percent of working parents say they aren't getting everything done that they want to, 57 percent feel like they don't spend enough time with their families; and 46 percent feel they have no time for leisure. Most people have actually lost time for pleasure compared to our ancestors a hundred years ago—despite the fact that in the olden days, they had to hand-wash their laundry.

Here's the strange thing: For most of the twentieth century, the broad consensus was that "working more than 40 hours a week was stupid, wasteful, dangerous, and expensive—and the most telling sign of dangerously incompetent management to boot," Robinson writes. Further, more than a hundred years of research shows that "every hour you work over 40 hours a week is making you less effective and productive over both the short and the long haul." Really! Even though most people think this makes intuitive sense, they are still surprised to hear that it is actually true.

This common sense is so widely ignored that overwork—and the problems with health, happiness, and productivity that it brings—is epidemic. At the same time that our lives have gotten easier in many ways—with devices to wash the dishes, learn just about anything, have our groceries delivered—it has also gotten easier to work more. We communicate with our co-workers at all hours of the day and night in person, by phone, text, and email. Instead of starting work at 8:00 a.m., we start at 6:00 a.m., when we switch off the alarm on our smartphones and check the emails that came in overnight.

While it's true that new technologies can save us a lot of time, often it doesn't matter, because we fill "found" time in ways that heighten neither productivity nor happiness. I understand this paradox both intellectually and personally, especially when I look back a few years.

I had work I really loved—as a parenting and life coach, as a sociologist at UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center, and as a keynote speaker, author, and blogger—but the sheer logistics of my single-parent triple-job life were leaving me dead tired, and, if I'm honest, often snappish with the people I loved the most. It seemed like I never rested anymore, never just sat down to watch a movie or read for pleasure, and I never saw my friends during the week. Every minute of every day, I needed to make progress answering emails, checking things off of lists, driving the kids around, and arranging things on one of my multiple task lists and Google calendars.

The low point for me came at a time when my business was really picking up and my life as a single mother was changing. I was launching an online class platform, had just moved to a new town, and was traveling a lot for speaking engagements. Constantly criss-crossing time zones (and arranging care for my children while I was gone) left me beyond exhausted.

I caught every virus on every airplane, and one autumn morning I found myself in the ER, dehydrated, in excruciating pain, with a 103 degree fever and a kidney infection. To make matters worse, I was scheduled to deliver a keynote address at a large conference in Atlanta at the end of the following week. I knew I couldn't do it. I

found myself hoping that the doctor would insist I stay the night in the hospital. I was having my first “hospital fantasy,” something I’d heard other women had.

(Not familiar with the concept of hospital fantasies? I was nearly as tired as this woman, who wrote on Katrina Alcorn’s “Working Moms Break” blog: “I stumbled back to work when my son was 6 weeks old. He had colic and chronic ear infections, so I really didn’t sleep for a year. No exaggeration. I would fantasize about having a minor car accident on the way to work. Nothing serious—just enough to lay me up in the hospital for a few days so I could sleep!”)

I knew I’d be okay soon, but I had simply been too tired for too long. I emailed the conference organizers once the IV antibiotics kicked in. They were furious that I’d emailed instead of calling, that I hadn’t given them more warning, that I hadn’t called before I was so sick that I needed hospitalization. They would not be booking me in the future.

I was devastated. As a lifelong perfectionist and overachiever, I found that disappointing the conference organizers was in many ways as painful for me as the infection.

That short stint in the hospital (in the end, I didn’t even spend the night) prompted me to begin the series of life experiments that led to this book. Could I bring joy and rest back into my life? This felt risky, as though I would have to give up financial reward and professional success for time to rest and play. But I wanted a life where I had enough ease in my day that I could stop and chat with my neighbor, throw a ball for my dog and delight in his joy (and not be simultaneously on the phone taking care of business), spend entire weekends making art and reading for pleasure and hanging out with my kids. I wanted to go back to cooking as a hobby, making real food for my family, rather than just warming up frozen stuff.

I needed to get my groove back, to live in my sweet spot rather than on a hamster wheel of busyness. The sweet spot is that point of optimum impact that athletes strike on a bat or racket or club, that place where an athlete has both the greatest power and the greatest ease. Playing tennis, I can feel it when I hit the ball in the

racket's sweet spot—the ball launches easily and powerfully over the net. When I hit the ball out of the sweet spot, my hit doesn't have as much strength and there is an element of strain. I can feel the resistance—the bump or the friction created by missing the sweet spot—in my body. If I spend too long hitting out of the sweet spot, I am likely to be sore or achy in a way that goes beyond normal fatigue.

This happens in life as well as sports; even if we are “hitting” fairly successfully, sometimes we feel the strain, stress, and resistance of being out of our sweet spot. As a young marketing manager, for example, I did my job well and was rewarded with “fun” projects and numerous promotions. But because working in marketing for a large corporation wasn't a good fit for me personally, I couldn't find and work from a sweet spot. I could get a hit, but there was no real ease: I always felt an element of strain, stress, and resistance that came from being in the wrong job.

A decade later I found myself hitting out of my sweet spot again, this time not necessarily because I was in the wrong field. I had work I loved, but the *structure* of my work was wrong. Once again, I was getting “hits”—a best-selling book, a prestigious job as the executive director of a revered research center at UC Berkeley—but hitting out of my sweet spot was exhausting, and eventually it took a toll on my health.

I hear similar stories from my doctor friends: They love healing people, but have a hard time working from their sweet spot under the constraints of the insurance companies.

Likewise, as a mom I have days where I miss the sweet spot altogether. It's not that I don't get through dinner and bedtime—the kids do end up fed and asleep. It's that when I miss my sweet spot as a mom, the dinner and bedtime routines utterly exhaust me; I feel the strain of traveling over a bumpy road rather than a smooth one.

When we are out of our sweet spot at work or at home, not only are we more likely to feel fatigue and overwhelm, we aren't fulfilling our potential. We miss out on the feeling of “flow,” when time stands

still, and we no longer feel pressured or rushed, when life and work no longer feel so *hard*.

Athletes increase the odds that they'll hit the sweet spot when they learn to "groove their swing." When golfers groove their swing, for example, the sweet spot of the club strikes the ball cleanly and launches its flight. When we find our groove we increase the amount of time that we are operating from the strength and ease of our sweet spot. Being in our sweet spot is a felt sense; we know intuitively that everything is aligned.

Our sweet spot doesn't require conscious thought; our unconscious mind tells us that we are there through our bodies. Our unconscious knowledge is shockingly powerful—and far more extensive than our conscious knowledge. Consider that our conscious brain processes information at a rate of about fifty bits per second, while our unconscious, intuitive nervous system processes information at a rate of 11 million bits per second. Fifty versus 11 million. That's not a small differential, and it means that our unconscious minds are constantly cluing us in to our experience, both internal and external, through our bodies, if only we pay attention.

Try listening to the feedback that your body is giving you right now. Say something really untrue out loud, preferably to someone else. Try something like "I love it when my boss humiliates me in front of my team," or "I adore having the stomach flu." Then notice: How does your body react? The response will likely be ever so slight: a minuscule pulling back, or tensing of your jaw, or a tiny shoulder raise. When I say something that my unconscious mind hates, my body tries to tell me through a little heaviness in my stomach. If I spend too long out of my sweet spot and do something that feels wrong for me, I end up with a stomachache.

Now try saying something out loud that is true for you, and notice your body's reaction. Try something like "I love the ocean," or "I love the feel of my baby's head on my cheek." How does your body respond? When I say something that is very true for me, or when someone else says it to me, I get "chills of truth"—the hair literally

stands up on my arms. And if I'm grappling with something hard, but the right answer comes up for me, I get "tears of truth." Tears that tell me that something is profoundly true feel qualitatively different from the tears that come from grief or hurt.

Buddha once said that "just as we can know the ocean because it always tastes of salt, we can recognize enlightenment because it always tastes of freedom." Our sweet spot always tastes of freedom and strength. And when we aren't living in our sweet spot, it always tastes of constraint and constriction. In life, as in sports, we feel the strain of not being in the sweet spot in our bodies: Our shoulders ache, our back hurts, or our stomach churns. We feel the friction and resistance inherent when we hit the frame of the racket or the part of the club head that meets the shaft. We might still land the shot—or the client or the promotion—but we feel the tension.

Just as we won't learn to groove our golf swing by working harder at the wrong technique, we won't find our sweet spot at work or at home by muscling through it. The tactics that most people use to cope with busyness—multi-tasking and using technology to cram more into each day—tend to backfire, as they did for me, making me sick and exhausted and far less productive, happy, and intelligent than I am now. We find our sweet spot by understanding the architecture of our minds and the biology of ease. We change our lives for the better when we use tactics that flow with our brain and physiology, not against them.

Living in the groove is, for many people, about bringing ease back into our lives. Ease—or having an "ease-ier" life—means different things to different people. Some people will come to this book because they need smoother sailing. They are headed in the right direction, but the waters are so choppy that they feel seasick. Some people need this book in order to dial up their creativity and their ability to sustain optimum performance in a highly competitive economy. Other people just want a more joyful and fulfilling life. Many are like I was, generally happy but also exhausted and overworked.

We can all locate the tremendous strength and power that comes from the sweet spot in order to become more productive and successful. Similarly, we need the sweet spot's ease and freedom in order to achieve happiness.

HOW I FOUND MY GROOVE

I knew in no uncertain terms that I would have to stop living in a constant state of fight or flight. I read, analyzed, tried out, refined, and tried out again all of the scientific research, empirically tested strategies, and experts' secrets. My goal was to create a "sweet spot equation"—a simple formula to taste both strength and ease more often. This book is the real-person application of that equation. It's not terribly complicated in the end:

Take Recess + Switch Autopilot On + Unshackle Yourself +
Cultivate Relationships + Tolerate Some Discomfort =
The Sweet Spot

Taking recess is actually a way to increase our brain power. It is about giving ourselves a break from overwork, but it is also about converting stress into productive and creative energy. When we use our brain's natural ability to run on autopilot, we let habits bear the burdens that we've been hoping willpower would shoulder. Unshackling ourselves from the things that tax us, like our smartphone's constant siren song, opens the door for more joy, and it is much simpler to do than you'd think. Connecting with others and cultivating our relationships may sound hokey (or hard), but there is solid science to back up what we gain when we nurture them.

Being able to tolerate a little discomfort is about three core life skills: (1) doing what it takes to develop mastery, which ultimately makes hard things easy; (2) having the courage to follow our passion and purpose instead of the crowd, which also makes hard things easy; and (3) being able to bounce back when the going gets rough.

To show you how quickly this equation can be set into motion, at the end of each chapter I offer one absurdly simple way to access

your sweet spot. This “Easiest Thing” section gives you one small, uber-simple way to instantly bring more ease into your life.

Each part of this equation, and each chapter in this book, is about generating more strength or ease or both. None of this is a dressed up way of saying “hey, just relax;” nothing makes me more tense than hearing that! Nor is this equation about having or doing or being less. It doesn’t require leaning into work while leaning away from your family and personal life, or vice versa. I am living proof that we do not need to sacrifice success in order to be happier, and we don’t have to compromise our happiness in order to be successful at work. Ease makes us better parents, friends, leaders, workers, healers, activists, artists, and colleagues. Finding our groove makes us more creative, intelligent, beloved, and productive across the board.

It’s not that making the shifts that I recommend will always be super easy; sadly, I can’t promise you Timothy Ferriss’s *The 4-Hour Workweek*. But neither am I going to insist that you dramatically change your career or move to the woods without your smartphone. Our lives are like a set of interlocking gears of varying sizes. Often, we try to improve our lives by moving the large gears: by getting divorced, or married, or moving out of the city, or quitting our job. And sometimes it is very necessary to rotate these big gears. But these big ones are always difficult to move. *The Sweet Spot* is about shifting the small gears, the ones that rotate relatively easily. And because all the gears are interlocking, when we tweak a small gear, large gears start to move—effortlessly—as well.

Or think of it this way: The “minimum effective dose” (MED) is considered to be the lowest dose of a pharmaceutical product that spurs a clinically significant change in health or well-being. I had to find the MED in everything in my life: sleep, meditation, blogging frequency, checking my email, school volunteering, homework help, date nights, quality time with my kids, housework. I had to accept that more was not necessarily better and that our go-go-go culture was pushing me not only beyond my MED, but beyond the “maximum tolerated dose,” the level at which an activity (or drug) becomes toxic and starts causing an adverse reaction.

My life has changed dramatically since the day I landed in the hospital with that brutal infection. Some of the changes lately have, incidentally, been shifts in big gears: I've changed my work structure and I've remarried; our fifteen-year-old diabetic dog passed away and we adopted a year-old puppy; my kids have embarked on middle school, and I became a stepmom to my husband's two kids. Yet the truly dramatic changes have not come from having a new job or a new husband or puppy or older kids or even becoming a stepmom. In fact, most of those structural changes in my life came well *after* I found my groove again.

And as you might imagine, the recent changes in my life at work and home have brought with them added stresses as well as joys. I now have four children instead of two, which results in additional chaos and the many challenges of being a stepparent in a blended family. Though I no longer have to worry about giving our diabetic dog shots, I have an energetic lab/border collie mix. And I've moved to a different county, which adds five more hours of driving to my weekly schedule.

So it wasn't these big changes that made my life better. For years previously I've been tweaking small gears and arming myself with small doses of strength and ease, and in so doing, I've re-wired my brain for happiness and sustained high performance—for profound joy, productivity, and intelligence. I've re-channeled the energy that stress was draining out of me into activities, habits, and behaviors that renew my vitality rather than waste it—that create my success, health, and happiness.

I'm far from perfect. It's just that I now have the ability to build more healthy habits without also building the stress that used to consume me. For example, I'm getting into the habit of keeping my kitchen clean all of the time instead of letting dishes pile up. It's not as simple as just intending to do it; I'm temperamentally more of a slob than a neatnik. There are a dozen dishes in the sink as I write. But the pileup is smaller than it ever used to be. I'm constantly building new skill sets and behaviors that run on autopilot, consciously re-engineering my life. You can engineer more strength and ease into your life, too, with a little know-how.

Ultimately, I re-created my life from knowing that there is enough—enough time, money, love—and that I am enough. Philanthropist Lynne Twist calls this mindset sufficiency:

[Sufficiency isn't] a quantity of anything. Sufficiency isn't two steps up from poverty or one step short of abundance. It isn't a measure of barely enough or more than enough. Sufficiency isn't an amount at all. It is an experience, a context we generate, a declaration, a knowing that there is enough, and that we are enough.

You, too, can live your life from a place of sufficiency. You can learn to live with an abundance of time and money and love and all of the things that you yearn for. In our materially rich but spiritually bereft culture, we often forget that how much we enjoy our lives really matters. How much meaning we find in this one lifetime actually counts. As Mary Oliver once wrote: “Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”

Indeed, what is it that you will do with your one wild and precious life? I suggest you find your sweet spot: that place where you have both great strength *and* great ease.