



Global  
Special

## A.W. LAKE Establishes New H.Q. and Resilience-Based Wellness® Concept in Colorado

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*A.W. LAKE, an award-winning wellness design firm based in Singapore, has recently acquired 16 hectares (40 acres) property in Colorado as the site of its new headquarters in the US. We are fortunate to catch up with Adria Lake to discuss their move as well as their focus on Resilience-based Wellness.*

**[Wellness Today Korea] You have recently relocated to Colorado. What are your immediate and long terms plan for A.W.LAKE?**

[AL] We recently purchased a 16- hectares (40 acres) mountain top property bordering an additional 300,000 hectares (800,000 acres) of forest land and Rocky Mountain wilderness and are currently busy constructing our new Headquarters and Resilience Training and Wilderness Camp. After spending the last twenty years in the spa/wellness and luxury hospitality industry, we are exploring a new concept and approach to wellness, one that is based on our inherent resilience and evolutionary hard-wiring.



**[WTK] Tell us more about this new concept.**

[AL] We named the concept Resilience-based Wellness®. I became interested in the whole idea of resiliency after being diagnosed with early on-set of MS in 2014. As someone who has been extremely active and physical my whole life, the possibility of losing my mobility and neurological functions was unthinkable. After more than a year of tests, treatments, and grim diagnosis, my partner and I packed our bags and started our 6 months hiatus. It was early June and the start of winter in the southern hemisphere, so we decided to head to the most southern tip of Chile, a stone throw away from Antarctica, in the dead of winter and worked our way north.

This wasn't just another trip. I wanted to know if the same body that has taken me on journeys to more than 50 different countries, climbed peaks, crossed deserts and walked endless plateaus can still muster the strength to cope with the harsh Patagonian winter, extreme heat and dryness of the northern Chile's Atacama desert, and the isolation of the world's largest and inhabitable Bolivian salt flats in the Andes. At the end of my 6 months experiment the answer was not only a resounding "yes" but my exposure to extreme cold, heat, isolation, remote and unfamiliar surroundings, strengthened my nervous system, re-calibrated my immune system, and restored my health.

**[WTK] Define Resilience-based Wellness (RbW®)?**

[AL] Based on my own personal experience and backed by our evolutionary history, Resilience-based Wellness® asserts that the capacity to not only survive but thrive is encoded in our DNA.

Through millions of years of natural selection, we inherited our ancestors' resilient, resourceful, and productive genes. The frail, weak, disease prone and fearful of our species would have died out. This is how we have evolved to be the planet's most successful species.

**[WTK] Is resilience mostly about pushing your physical limits, tough talks, and deprivation?**

[AL] I recently read about a group of elderly survivors, mostly women, of one of the worst environmental disasters on the planet who refused to leave their homeland and exposed themselves to a level of radiation 400 times that of Hiroshima. They stayed not as a dare or act of courage, but because of the babushkas (grandmothers) of Chernobyl, leaving their homeland was worse than death. They not only survived, but outlived those who left the "dead zone".

There are many other examples of extreme resilience from ordinary people in all walks of life. Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. We commonly demonstrate resilience. Children of abusive parents or those who grew up in destitute and impoverished surroundings; survivors of natural and/or man-made disasters; marginalized, mistreated, and exploited groups of people; victims of wars, terrorism, and extreme violence have, in the past and present, shown resilience beyond anything we can imagine. Resilience is not something that we need to acquire, attain, or learn. It is an inherent human trait.

**[WTK]: Wellness is a multi-trillion dollar industry that has continued to grow and gain popularity. Why fix something that isn't broken?**

[AL] Wellness sells. But does it deliver? Wellness is an extremely successful brand/business that has gone from niche to mainstream by promising "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being" through a proactive or preventive approach to health that should, in theory, enhance one's quality of life. Its appeal is intuitive. Who wouldn't want to be well, feel good or do a bit of good. In a world full of adversities, wellness promotes and promises a healthier, happier, better YOU.

The reality, however, is quite the opposite. According to World Health Organization's latest report (released in January 2017) on the top 10 causes of deaths worldwide, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) accounts for 70% of the 56.4 million deaths, ranging from 37% in low-income countries to 88% in high income countries. All but 1 of the 10 leading causes of death in high income countries were NCDs. Non-communicable diseases or chronic diseases are usually caused by lifestyle factors.

Four types of NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases – account for almost two-thirds of all deaths globally. These are the very type of diseases that the wellness industry claims to reduce and/or prevent. Curiously, the industry bets its future growth on the rising costs of treating chronic diseases and the deteriorating health of the global population.

**[WTK] So, why has prevention-based wellness failed?**

[AL] Prevention has its roots in ancient traditions and systems of medicine. From the time we became conscious of our own mortality, the desire to preserve our health and prolong our existence has consumed us. Every culture, civilization, and even the most primitive community has developed their own complex systems of medicine and/or healing traditions. Many, if not all, share the same key principle of maintaining our natural flow of energy and living in harmony with one's surrounding.

Modern day wellness, however, thrives on its "we are under siege" missive. Celebrity bloggers, doctors, gurus, masters, and other wellness infallibles, want us to believe that we are helpless victims of external forces, stronger, bigger and smarter than us. They warn us against new strains of bacteria, virus, microbes, toxins, stress, pollutants, allergens, not to mention all things

gluten. We wear devices that remind us just how sleep deprived, poorly nourished, lacking in work-life balance, and in need of more mindfulness, gratitude and a large dose of compassion we are to have a shot at happiness and well-being.

The language and mindset of wellness is also tellingly cautious, anxious, fearful. We go on retreats to escape our taxing, toxic, stressful surroundings. We seek to surrender, accept, and abandon if we are not already abstaining from, detoxing, and treating whatever ails us. We count calories, avoid fat, cut sugar, and argue over everything else. We trust in Non-, Anti-, and Free- fill-in-the-blank labels. And, we want our water oxygenated, air filtered, food certified, sleep and steps quantified.

Then there are the diet-tribes. The issue of what to eat has not only become complex and confusing, it has also taken a moralistic bent. This US vs. Them approach is defensive, insular, divisive. Instead of fostering openness and reserving a healthy dose of skepticism, wellness can be tribal and trivial. And, far from enhancing our quality of life, our fixation on self-improvement and optimization has become an endless pursuit in of itself.

So, while the wellness brand still sells and attracts millions, we are starting to see a backlash of wellness fatigue that may quickly turn into apathy or worse, distrust.

**[WTK] How is Resilience-based Wellness® different than prevention-based wellness?**

[AL] RbW® takes on a different approach and attitude towards prevention. Rather than striving to protect ourselves from external forces, control our environment, or fretting over the infinite number of possible threats, we focus on building our resistance to them. By exposing and opening ourselves to as many different types of unfamiliar situations and conditions, resilient individuals face stress, adversity, trauma, tragedy, and threats from a state of "readiness" and are confident that they will bounce back stronger and even more resilient.

**[WTK] Could you tell us what to look for in Resilience-based Wellness® and its applications within the Wellness industry?**

[AL] Resilience-based Wellness® advocates:

**Confidence** – Resilient individuals project a sense of calm and readiness that come from practice and competence.

Resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. We all have it in us, but, practice makes perfect. Just as great athletes make winning look easy, resilient individuals thrive with grace.

**Clarity** – Having a clear sense of purpose, drive and direction keep resilient individuals on course and moving forward despite of obstacles or hurdles on their way.

**Adaptability** – Resilient individuals use their curiosity, creativity, and resourcefulness to stay flexible and buoyant in facing situations which are beyond their control.

**Community** – as social animals, evolution conditions us to look after one another. So, although self-reliance is key to resiliency, we are hardwired to thrive together, not alone. Building and being a part of a strong community and kinship strengthens our resilience and anchors us to a common cause and purpose.

How the Wellness Industry can be more resilient and stay relevant: