

A Life-Changing Journey

Self-indulgence drew me to the California Health & Longevity Institute (CHLI) at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village. The thought of a routine checkup in luxurious surroundings was simply too tempting to resist.

“Imagine,” I said to my husband, “having a nurse come to my room to do a fasting blood draw and then, when she leaves, calling room service to order breakfast.”

Located less than three hours north of San Diego, CHLI is a world-class facility incorporating Eastern and Western medical philosophies. Available here are diagnostic testing, early-warning assessments, sleep medicine services, a full dental clinic, a dermatology clinic, healthy cooking classes and dietitian consultations, and fitness

and exercise consultations. (www.fourseasons.com/westlakevillage, www.chli.com)

While it is unique today, this über-luxe wellness opportunity may be a pilot for a business model that is duplicated across the country. Conceived by David Murdock, owner of Dole Foods and founder of the Dole Nutrition Institute, CHLI has attracted the attention — and the investment — of the health insurance giant Wellpoint.

Business models were the farthest thing from my mind when I walked into the hotel and found myself surrounded by gorgeous antiques, Oriental rugs, floral displays, and extensive collections of Asian ceramics. Like other Four Seasons, the atmosphere is that of a gracious home where modern facilities are blended with



With 28 rooms, The Spa at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village offers a wide variety of treatments

traditional décor — but this hotel includes a medical center, which offers digital MRIs, mammograms, and colonoscopies.

My checkup got off to a rocky start when my Bod Pod body composition analysis placed me “outside of the healthy range.”

“Hmm, maybe this isn’t going to be so much fun after all,” I thought to myself. However, somewhere during my lifestyle consultation I had one of those heartfelt moments that told me I was just where I needed to be.

This session started a uniquely personal journey that helped me look at the stress factors in my life as well as my bounty of blessings. The consultant and I talked about “flow,” that blissful state of effortless concentration and enjoyment, and the book *Finding Flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. She also provided me with a life balance wheel to contemplate and complete, and we discussed the



A lavish display of orchid arrangements is the highlight of the resting area at The Spa at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village

principle of the book *One Small Step Can Change Your Life* by Robert Maurer, PhD. With her guidance, I identified one small “action step” I could take.

The next day started with an energy walk led by the fitness director, but the highlight of the morning was a presentation by Steven Tan MD, MTOM, LAc, director of complementary and alternative medicine at CHLL. Tan is a member of the UCLA faculty and an expert in stress biology. His talk “Staying Well in the Face of Modern Stress” started with a



Guests at CHLL have the option of learning to prepare meals that are both healthful and delicious

surprisingly extensive list of stress-induced illnesses. He then went on to discuss the importance of mind-body therapies, such as massage, acupuncture, and meditation, as well as balancing work and personal life.

Of course, healthy eating is a big part of staying well, so I attended a hands-on cooking class where we talked about plant-based diets and the benefits of the antioxidants in fruits and vegetables. One of the findings from researchers who studied Okinawans, who live — on average — seven years longer than Americans, is that they eat at least five different colored vegetables daily. (www.bluezones.com/live-longer-better/okinawa-findings)

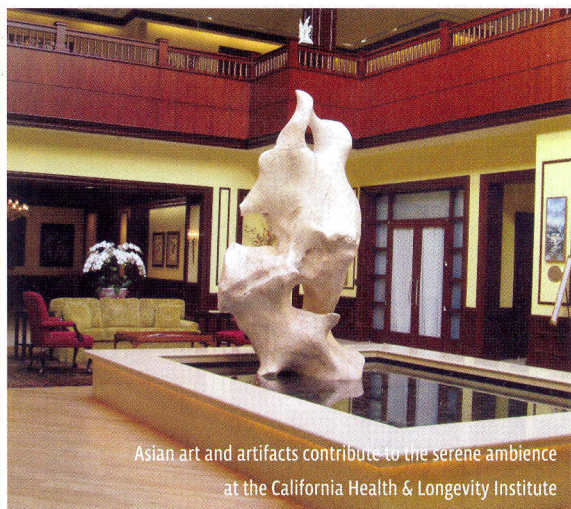
After lunch, I met privately with Tan (by the way MTOM stands for Masters of Traditional Oriental Medicine) for an acupuncture treatment and then visited the spa — the largest Four Seasons spa in the world — where I perused the menu of

options. With 28 treatment rooms, there is space for a wide range of treatments. The most appealing to me were the tandem massage (two therapists working in synchronicity), the craniosacral therapy (a holistic treatment of the scalp that decreases stress and improves neck and back pain), and the “hydrossage,” an underwater technique.

The spa also has a beautiful orchid-filled lounge for relaxing. This space gave me an opportunity to review and absorb some of what I had learned.

Self-indulgence drew me to the California Health & Longevity Institute at the Four Seasons, but my visit proved to be much more thought provoking — in fact, life changing — than I ever would have predicted.

If you’re looking for a new you in the New Year — you might just start your search in Westlake Village. ELIZABETH HANSEN



Asian art and artifacts contribute to the serene ambience at the California Health & Longevity Institute



The Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village offers all the comforts of an elegant residence