

## BUSINESS

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## Counselor points the way

*Sunny Massad has seen the damage of stress*

**A**S a child of the '50s, I enjoyed black and white television sitcoms that portrayed an idealized life. My mother actually dressed like June Cleaver in "Leave It to Beaver." She was the quintessential stay-at-home mom who had freshly-baked cookies and milk ready for her children when we arrived home from school — until she had the first of many "nervous breakdowns."

That is what we called them back then. My father was so upset by her hospitalization he collapsed with his first heart attack. He was only 34. What looked like a normal family on the outside was full of stress, anxiety and dissatisfaction on the inside.

This kind of disconnection with oneself is still prevalent today. Oftentimes we find ourselves simply going through the motions of our 40+ hour work week rarely taking

the time to reflect on our lives. As a wellness counselor, I help ordinary people with ordinary problems find ways to come home to themselves. Most of us don't need years of therapy to handle the chronic stress and strain that plague our daily lives. What we need is a healthy dose of rejuvenation.

Students and clients come to the Hawaii Wellness Sacred Retreat Center deep in Kalihi Valley to nurture their mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. They often arrive tired and rushed. But just inside the gates, the melody of Kalihi Stream, the fragrance of yellow ginger, the accents of orange heliconia and the coolness provided by the canopy of tall shade trees immediately instill a sense of peace and tranquility.

Some come for wellness counseling. Some come to learn self-hypnosis or meditation, sometimes for no other reason than to be able to sleep more restfully at night.

As a wellness counselor, I teach

people to take responsibility for the only two things they have control over; their own attitudes and behavior. As president and founder of the Hawaii Wellness Institute, I assist people in finding just the right personal development or professional enhancement curriculum that will serve their needs.

I'm glad that people today are looking inward and know that they need to nurture themselves first in order to lead happy, productive lives. I learned the hard way that my mother's emotional collapse and my father's physical ailments were both preventable. Our bodies and minds are unbelievably resilient, but like our motor vehicles, the harder we drive them, the more care they need to run well. I am a "wellness mechanic," basically, providing human "tune-ups."

*Hawaii At Work features tells what people do for a living in their own words. Send submissions to: [business@starbulletin.com](mailto:business@starbulletin.com)*