

In this edited excerpt from her book, Dr Ela Manga describes the symptoms we experience when our lives feel too demanding and unstructured to find happiness

# THE ENERGY CODE



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How do you find time to be present?  
 How do you find time to be happy?  
 Jacaranda describes how to  
 relevant to you and how to  
 switch off from the noise of  
 healthy and meaningful  
 relationships while pursuing  
 your passions.

lock her attention down to just one thing and felt that even though she was busier than ever, she was achieving less in any given amount of time. Her work crept into her social life and her phone became a third wheel in her relatively new relationship. She found it difficult to relax, focus on a book or even watch a movie without her attention being scattered in 100 different places. Physically, her system was taking strain from the effects of constant high levels of adrenaline. Her shoulders were as hard as rocks and she was constantly at the chiropractor having her spine manipulated.

Throughout this book, we've been referring to our built in energy giving mechanism of the reactive fight or flight response and the need for recuperation through the "rest and recover" mode. We've emphasised that this mechanism is unable to keep up with the intensity of our technologically based lives and is causing havoc in our energy systems.

The fact that the brain is plastic and adaptable to our experiences has been a relatively recent discovery in neuroscience and the implications are worrying. While the brain's adapted to split attention and instant gratification, as well as always being on, the body's suffering the effects. It's unable to keep up and technostress is becoming a very real problem.

As challenging as it was, Neo started to practise "mindful connection". She trained herself to stay focused on one task at a time until it was completed. In this way, she found that she completed more tasks in one day, which greatly reduced her anxiety. What she found most helpful was taking a breath after every email, phone call, meeting or task as a way of "wrapping it up" and recouping her energy before moving on to the next thing.

She made a concerted effort to keep her phone out of sight whenever she was with anyone. She took inspiration from the words of someone who'd met Nelson Mandela and reflected that whenever Madiba met someone – even if it was for a brief minute – he made them feel as if they were the only person in the room. She aspired to relate to others in that way. Just making a few of these changes, Neo felt the quality of her life improving. In no way did she feel that she'd perfected the skill; it was a constant work-in-progress, but at least she felt as if she was no longer skimming the surface of life. By being more present, she was able to notice more, and experience life more fully. She felt as if she was living deeply and widely at the same time. **D**

The scene was perfect. Just as she'd planned it. The hazy dawn sky was the perfect backdrop. The rising sun teased the cool morning air. The hiss of gas and fire sliced through the silence as the hot air balloons floated up towards the sky. The tour group that she'd planned this event for was mesmerised.

Meantime, back on the ground, as Neo captured the image on her iPhone and loaded it onto Instagram, she lost the moment. A WhatsApp notification popped up from her sister with a picture of her new puppy, and three more emails appeared from the last time she refreshed her inbox 10 minutes ago. Neo flitted from one emotion to the next, without even knowing it: puppy induced warmth and fuzziness moved to irritation and then quickly to guilt. But to Neo, it all felt the same. Almost every experience tightened the knot in her belly and fuelled her pounding heart. A feeling that had become normal.

She responded to all three emails. By the time she looked up from her phone, the balloons had shrunk and were almost out of sight.

Neo is part of the Net Generation: born in the Eighties, smart, adaptable and urgently seeking meaning, pleasure and success. At the age of 24, Neo experienced a full blown crisis of meaning.

When we went through the Energy Zone Map, Neo ticked almost all the behavioural symptoms for Phase 2 adrenalised energy and even some of the physical ones. She was wired all the time. She felt as if her mind was on a racecourse and that the race wasn't coming to an end. She woke up frequently in the middle of the night to check her phone and even answered emails at that time. It gave her some degree of comfort that she'd dealt with it and it would reduce her morning "to do" list. She found it difficult to