

Reading Group Guide



TINA WELLS

with Stephanie Smith

Author Q&A with TINA WELLS



1. Tell us about the title of your book: *The Elevation Approach*. What does it mean?

I didn't want to use the word *method* in the title. To me, an approach feels more like a suggestion, something you can ease into. My hope is that the reader will let this material sit with them and then find a way to ease into these principles until the entire approach is second nature.

2. You break down the Elevation Approach into four distinct phases. What inspired you to structure your plan this way?

Honestly, nature. I learned from my friends Kate Northrup and Latham Thomas that we always have to be in sync with nature if we want to be our most productive—yet not burnt out. My old ways had me feeling so burnt out but now, syncing with the seasons—in my case, my four phases—just makes all of this easier.

3. Why do you think shifting the focus from work-life balance to work-life harmony is especially important today?

After surviving a pandemic, we all know balance doesn't work. It didn't exist for any of us for two years, and it's even more of a myth now than it was before. Harmony is attainable, and we have more control. It's like cooking—sometimes you can throw a bunch of stuff together, but you know the minute you add something . . . and the flavor or texture is just . . . off. You know, when you add something to your life that doesn't feel in sync with anything else? Harmony means you can fuse your personal and professional. It means you can have one, big, harmonious life. It allows you to let go of the stress of the balancing act—which is why it was always called an act. It's just not real.

4. You describe curiosity as an important fear-fighting and problem-solving tool. How can we manage to stay curious when things get overwhelming and scary?

To be honest, when you're scared, that's the time to stick with it. I spent most of the last year tuning in to my curiosity, and I was really overwhelmed and scared. I was doing something I hadn't done before and each day I was learning something new. This wasn't my comfort zone, but it paid off! My advice is to take lots of personal time-outs and encourage yourself. Speak directly to your fear and don't dismiss it. Honor it. Honor it for what it is teaching you at the moment. I can't tell you how many times I said to myself, "Well, ok. I am sucking at this right now. I don't like not knowing how to do this, but I'm learning—and learning can be fun." And then I leaned into that idea of learning being fun.

5. Some of the principles in the book, such as Make Deposits before Withdrawals, help readers evaluate the relationships and people we have in our lives. Why is this so important?

Honestly, this is the most important part of my entire approach. We have to manage our relationships. Relationships can make life so much better or worse, and they can affect us emotionally. They can do catastrophic damage to how we show up in life if not properly managed. There are only a few people who should have that level of access to your deepest parts. Not everyone is your friend. Not everyone should be trusted with your secrets. And not everyone deserves your time and attention. And everyone does not deserve your time and attention. You always want to be your authentic self with everyone you encounter, but you don't owe anyone but your closest friends transparency.

Also, I hope it goes without saying that you should not share with others the role they play! Everyone is important and everyone deserves to be treated well. You are just choosing to go deeper with your very limited time capacity.

Time is such valuable currency, and you may not be accomplishing your goals because you are spending time in situations that do not deserve your energy. I am certainly not suggesting you cut anyone off unless you need to. But you may need to rethink how you allocate time to make more space for yourself.

6. Your journey as the founder of the Buzz Marketing Group (BMG) helped you develop the Elevation Approach. What is something you wish you could have told yourself when you first became an entrepreneur?

Hands down, know your numbers. I spent years in crisis because I wasn't clear on my numbers, and it wreaked havoc on me physically and mentally. Getting that clarity could have changed things so much faster.

This is why I placed this principle in Preparation. There's no need to get excited about a business idea that lacks a sound financial foundation.

7. Recreation is a key part of the Elevation Approach. What would you tell someone who isn't used to incorporating rest and play into their daily routine?"

It's going to feel weird at first . . . but go with it. This phase went against everything I thought I knew about business. I was running my first business during the hustle and grind decade. That's all we saw in our culture. I know I can do hard things, but I no longer want to. I don't want to feel like I'm battling my body to get ahead in my business.

I also want to speak to those readers who feel that others ultimately control their work life. This is so real. And to those readers, I want to tell you that you may not own those 8–10 hours while you're at work, but you can do everything in your power to make sure every moment you're not at work has work-life harmony, and that will start to flow into work—and it will get better.

Recreation doesn't have to mean a fancy vacation. I love solving riddles and brainteasers or organizing a night of Jackbox Games with my family or friends. It's the kind of fun I need after a long day. It also has nothing to do with work—which is what Recreation is about.

8. Talk to us about choosing joy over happiness. What happens when we prioritize joy instead of happiness?

Joy lasts longer, that's for sure! I just shared how challenging the last year has been for me, learning so many new things. I was not happy with all of this newness, but I was joyful. If you interacted with me last year, you would have had no clue how stressed, at many times, unhappy I was. But I always had joy. Joy is something that radiates from the deepest parts of our being and everyone around us can sense it. It has nothing to do with momentary happiness. It's a choice you're making to create those moments for yourself.

9. What advice do you have for anyone who might be struggling to take the leap into pursuing their goals?

Just take the first step. And then take the next right step. If someone had told me two years ago that I'd be doing everything I'm doing right now, there's no way I would have believed them! I would have been completely overwhelmed by the reality of my goals. But by taking the next, right step, I was able to get here. The Elevation Approach is made up of twelve next, right steps that will get you to the place you need to go. It may not be where you think you want to go, but it will be the place your heart needs to land for the work-life harmony you crave.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

and Writing Prompts



PHASE ONE

PREPARATION: This is the time for planning. You gather the materials, tools, and resources you need to get started, and you evaluate what you can realistically provide for your new project.

Questions:

- What are some things that you've been struggling to let go of? Using the tips provided, how will you begin decluttering in your life?
- Why is curiosity an important part of your life? What are some ways that you'll try to cultivate curiosity each day?
- What kind of data do you need to achieve your upcoming goals? What steps can you take to get these numbers?

Prompt: At the end of Phase One, you have now navigated many forms of preparation. How has your plan to work toward your goal evolved with the discoveries and information that you have gathered during this phase?

PHASE TWO

INSPIRATION: This is when you seek out the books, images, places, and people that spark your creative energy. You kick-start your new idea and open yourself up to the world around you.

Questions:

- What are your go-to sources of inspiration? Do you think you're giving yourself enough time and space to find inspiration?
- Which aspect of creating a ritual do you struggle with the most? How can you adjust your routine to make sure you regularly carve out space for yourself?
- How does your tribe help you in your day-to-day life? What types of support do your tribe members offer you?
- How has the Inspiration phase impacted how you view your relationships? What would you do if you found yourself in an unbalanced relationship?

Prompt: Phase Two presented three different principles that help you stay open to new ideas without losing sight of your vision and your needs. Thinking back on the Principles presented, which were the easiest for you to practice? Which ones were more challenging to apply to your life? Write down three steps you can take to better implement the principles in the Inspiration phase.

PHASE THREE

RECREATION: This is when you take a break from your work. You indulge in a bit of fun to recharge your batteries, try activities unrelated to your goal, and allow yourself to take a breather.

Questions:

- How do rest and play help you elevate your life?
- When was the last time you experienced true recreational time? How did that make you feel?
- What was it like to move out of your safe zone? How did it help you move forward with your goal?
- What does joy look like for you in your day-to-day life? How can you add more joy to your routine?

Prompt: Describe a moment that gave you joy this week. What was happening? How did you feel? How can you apply the wisdom that you learned from this experience going forward?

PHASE FOUR

TRANSFORMATION: This is the phase for action and then reflection. You dive into the work you need to do to achieve your goal. Then, you assess the results, considering how the work has made you feel and the progress you've attained.

Questions:

- Have you decided to move on or move forward with your goal? How did you feel after making this decision? What new goals can you start working toward?
- What does faith look like to you? How are your spiritual practices helping guide you through transformation?
- How can letting go help you achieve your goal? What steps can you take to better recognize when to say goodbye?

Prompt: Looking back on this process, what have you learned about yourself as you've worked toward your goal? What new changes and lessons would you like to incorporate into your life? Write down all that comes to mind.

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