

Naked Idealism: Expose Your Authentic Side and Create a Sustainable Life and World

By Dave Wheitner

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Do you dream of a sustainable and just world, but also desire more happiness, direction, balance, or fulfillment? Perhaps you work or volunteer in an idealist field and feel like an overwhelmed martyr, or perhaps you earn a decent paycheck but want a more meaningful career. Maybe you're a current or aspiring progressive leader, a concerned citizen, or a student seeking more focus and impact. Maybe you long to bring forgotten ideals, dreams, or creative talents back into your work and play, or know someone who does. Naked Idealism will entertain and refresh you with an approach to authentic living that supports both personal fulfillment and a sustainable, just world. You will learn how to expose your authentic core, clarify what's really important to you, integrate your personal and community-level visions, and relate to the world more genuinely and effectively. You will examine your intentions for doing good, perhaps even chuckling at yourself during some of the exercises. Wheitner shares valuable tools from positive psychology, career theory, persuasion, organizational dynamics, and more. Candidly addressing challenging and often avoided topics, Naked Idealism also reminds you not to take life too seriously. Wheitner weaves in humor from his own circuitous trek toward authenticity: a cross-country adventure, a peculiar rainwater irrigation system, vegetarianism and veganism, real-life lesbian grandmothers from Mars, and a backyard abandoned coal mine spice up the journey. You are encouraged to remain fully clothed, but open to the life and world you envision!

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover
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About the Author
Dave Wheitner, founder of Idealist Coach, blends experience from settings spanning life coaching, counseling psychology, management, policy research, and environmental public health. He has conducted behavioral leadership assessments for managers, created and taught a graduate self-development course for community leadership students, counseled adults recovering from addictions, conducted environmental public health and poverty research, and managed a multi-agency project on urban family health and wellness.

Raised in a near-poverty environment, Dave later experienced vastly different settings. After studying psychology at Yale, he earned an M.S. in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.A. in Counseling from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He enjoys guiding others toward more fulfilling and meaningful lives, composing music, cycling, jogging through Pittsburgh's urban woods, and co-hosting vegan waffle parties.

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This book is for you if you're a progressive-minded individual who wishes to make your personal life *and* the world more sustainable and authentic. This may seem challenging when powerful ideals and a deep concern for the world make it difficult for us to enjoy life - quite an irony if we desire to improve the quality of life for others.

This book is for you if any of the following also seem to fit:

- I'm a professional, student, leader or volunteer in an "idealist" career (health and human services, environmental issues, public policy, social justice, animal rights, creative arts, education, etc.) who often feels like a martyr.
- I love my paycheck, but my job or career isn't the "real me."

- In striving to live my ideals, I sometimes feel frustrated or isolated, like I'm on the wrong planet.
- I'm a concerned citizen or community leader who feels overwhelmed by the problems of the world.
- I'm ready for a major life transition but am not yet sure where I wish to go. I fear ending up midway between Fumble and Buck!
- Somewhere along the way I abandoned ideals, dreams or artistic talents that were important to me. I'd like to revisit them.
- I'd like to separate what I really *want* to do from what I feel I *should* do.
- I want to relate to others more authentically and effectively.
- I'd like to promote my ideals and achieve more impact in the world.
- I manage, own or work in an organization that provides socially or ecologically conscious products or services, or is moving toward this.

A *sustainable life* includes fun, fulfillment, balance, success and expression of what's most important to us. Without these elements, it's difficult to maintain energy over the long term. A *sustainable world* includes elements that contribute to a healthy, harmonious, peaceful and life-supporting existence: environmentally friendly practices, social justice, creative expression, and a deep respect for all living things, to name a few. *Authenticity*, a vital component of both, is full and honest expression of who we really are, through the activities we engage in, the visions we pursue, and the way we interact with others.

Several key assumptions drive this book:

- **When we understand and honor our authentic selves, and proactively create what's important to us** rather than reacting to problems, we're less likely to engage in socially and environmentally destructive consumption patterns. By clarifying and pursuing what we want more directly, we often reduce the need to seek materialistic replacements to "fill the void."
- **When we relate to ourselves and to the world honestly and authentically,** we reduce prejudice, fear and unnecessary competition that often result in conflict and suffering.
- **When we're happy with our own lives,** we're better able to share our energy and gifts with others. We're less likely to face burnout, and we can have greater positive impact in our career, hobbies, and volunteer activities.

If the previous thoughts strike a chord, we have a great deal to talk about, as I have struggled with many of these things myself - and still do! I share my thoughts with you not as an author who has completed a journey, but as a fellow learner in the continual process of striving to live more authentically myself. Writing this book has provided the courage to rekindle some long-delayed pursuits of childhood dreams, and to address some areas where I've been "standing in my own way." I hope that reading it has the same benefits for you.

I've bounced among many idealist settings trying to find my niche: researching environmental public health issues, managing a citywide data system on child and family well-being, counseling formerly incarcerated men, and examining the outcomes of families leaving public assistance rolls, to name a few. In those activities, I often felt overwhelmed by the state of the world, not sure that I was making enough of a difference. I've also learned through the struggles of a few extended job searches and career transitions, and hold a special place in my heart for people striving to "find their place."

I've been quite an overachiever as well, always taking myself very seriously and setting exceptionally high self-expectations. My childhood was consumed with maintaining an image of consistent competence and proving my value to the world. I spent more time being a perfect student and people-pleaser rather than doing what I enjoyed. Although I always knew that I wanted to escape my low-income upbringing, I wasn't really sure where I wanted to go. Or perhaps I always had a pretty good idea, but just wasn't willing to listen

to myself yet. Because of this, I had no way of gauging if and when I was doing enough. This translated into a desire to be the perfect employee, and I worked very hard for the praise I often received. Alongside all of this, I often felt miserable, frustrated, lonely and unfulfilled.

Over the last several years I've begun to move toward reconnecting with many of my ideals and living more authentically. This has required stepping outside the box (or outside the barrel), and it sometimes places me at odds with "the real world." Some have questioned me for anti-status-quo behavior like riding a bicycle with metal studded snow tires on icy winter days, making America's longest-running annual "waffle party" entirely vegan, building a large rainwater irrigation system in our yard, or constructing odd looking sound baffles in our home to aid with music recording. However, it has all begun to increase my happiness. It is part of integrating and expressing the important pieces of my life in a more meaningful way. I hope that this book helps you to advance in a similar process!

Are you ready for an adventure?

Users Review

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Sandra Conaway:

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