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# HARMONYA BY FRANCESC MIRALLES

## White Paper



Francesc Miralles  
HARMONIA



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## Introduction: The silent pandemics

Nowadays humans face an awkward paradox. In 2021, the ratio between individuals suffering from hunger, overweight and obesity was 1: 2.8: 1.26, meaning that for every 4 people suffering from starvation there were 11 people with overweight and 5 sufferings obesity<sup>1-3</sup>.

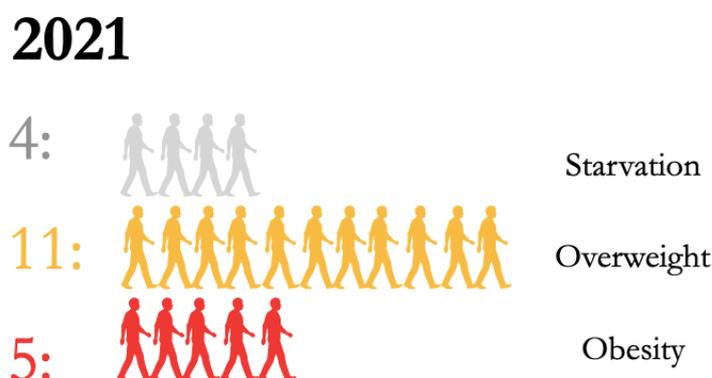


Figure 1. Proportional ratio starvation / obesity / overweight (World, 2021)

In other circumstances, the realistic perspective of eradicating starvation would be a reason to celebrate, but the other side of the figures does not look very encouraging. After years of moderate decline, the Covid-19 pandemics made the number of people suffering from starvation rise to approximately 811 million, twice and a half the population of the USA.

Moreover, the increase in numbers of overweight and obesity is triggering the alarm. Still, these facts are systematically ignored. In 2016, 39% of the world adult population was in danger of being overweight and the number of obese people, 18 years old and above, was more than 965 million, more than three times the population of the USA. However, the most concerning scenario are the 340 million children and adolescents, from 5 to 19 years old, suffering from obesity in 2016. Besides, the numbers regarding infantile obesity, under 5 years old, do not look very optimistic.

## 1. The Problem

### Is our health at stake?

Overweight and obesity are the cause of many deaths and predispose a lot of suffering. A cluster of diseases called metabolic syndrome, including obesity,

hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and alteration of lipid composition, is attributed mainly to an unhealthy lifestyle. Furthermore, metabolic syndrome is being pointed to as the main cause of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, neurodegenerative, muscle-skeletal diseases, and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases<sup>4</sup>.

In fact, metabolic syndrome is the major accelerator of ageing and the effector of the unbalances that contribute to worsen comorbidities, such as Covid-19 infection, and delay recoveries.

Therefore, a very intriguing scene awaits many people living in developed societies. In most cases, having the possibility to afford satisfactory medical care doesn't fix an unhealthy lifestyle and doesn't guarantee to avoid premature ageing, degeneration, and a great deal of avoidable pain.

The faster we understand these facts and accept the possible consequences, the lower will be the price in pain of the future invoice.

## Why

The explanation can be found in the circumstances among human evolution.

Expounded very simple, our physiology has evolved for hundreds of thousands of years in very hostile environments, stressful and most of the time, not enough food availability. Food, for humans, was the most precious and limited good, comparable to nowadays gold, diamonds or Bitcoin. And conversely, this limited good had to be consumed in stress, in the go, under alert, and promptness, since rivals or beasts could appear immediately and steal the food or even devour the eater.

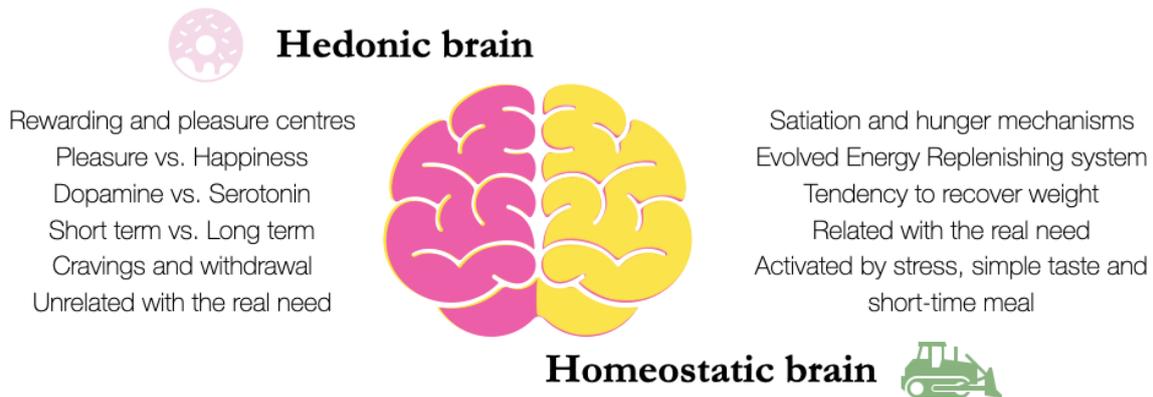
In this environment of stress and scarcity, human metabolism developed mechanisms to protect the energy losses, compelling the organism to compensate the energy expenditure as far as possible. Our metabolism developed hormonal responses that modify the brain biochemistry and enhance the activity in certain cerebral areas. Therefore, the activity of the digestive hormone ghrelin activates in the brain the hunger area, and the adipose tissue hormone leptin prioritises the preservation of the previous amounts of triglycerides in the fatty tissue cells.

This is the reason, among others, to explain the strong inertia behind the "Yo-yo" effect or the tendency of gaining back the weight loss or even increasing it. And accordingly, obesity has been considered a chronic disease by both the USA's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and European Commission<sup>5,6</sup>.

## The hedonic brain

In humans and many animals, the pleasure areas in the brain activate to emphasise the liking, wanting, and learning towards an attitude or an object, such as food. Likewise, the brain devours glucose, and the consumption of sweet food activates certain clusters in the brain called pleasure and rewarding areas. But this addiction is not new. The word "*hedús*" was the Greek name for *sweet*, and consequently, the

word *hedonic*, meaning pleasure in ancient Greece, derives directly from *sweet*. Sweet is mostly infallible, as could be many other drugs causing addiction. But we should not feel guilty for our hedonic inclinations since these brain mechanisms are the result of evolution. The craving for sweet, tasty, and energetic food creates an extra motivation to stay alive and resourceful in the food fight<sup>7</sup>.



## The change of rules

When humans were able to overcome food scarcity and create safe environments, we changed a major rule of evolution. This circumstance occurred for the first time in human history, and it happened so fast that the evolutionary mechanisms were not ready to offer an adaptive response. Therefore, humans, found themselves naturally unprotected when exposed to food abundance and lack of stress.

Likewise, when our hedonic brain rules, we are not prepared to exert self-limitation amid an endless abundance of delicatessen. The hedonic brain can play countless tricks convincing the subject that freedom consists in embracing the instincts while repeating that the limit is still afar; which is mostly the opposite. Furthermore, people expressing alterations in FTO or MC4R genes can be defenceless facing an unrestrictive source of food and are easy victims of obesity.

If out of control, the hedonic brain follows the same mechanisms of any drug addiction, pushing the limits, increasing the cravings, compulsiveness, the mirage of freedom... Subsequently, overconsumption of calories is the first step towards overweight and obesity.

## Deficiencies amid the excess

On the other hand, often associated with overeating, there is a remarkable low quality of dietary micronutrients. Many phytochemicals found in fresh food, farmed naturally, and growing from traditional sources, are associated with health and longevity. In Harmonia we call these substances blessing biomolecules and the precious high-quality food, healing food or medicinal food. All these aspects are widely discussed in our book “Kusuimun”.

Therefore, how much is not the only important aspect towards a balanced life, also we should consider what we eat, how, and when, along with many other aspects of our lifestyle.

## Chasing a Hoax: Pleasure as Happiness Replacement

When enumerating the evolutionary, genetic, metabolic, neurologic, and psychological causes that predispose to metabolic syndrome and premature ageing, we must consider a mind-spiritual factor too. Humans have always been discussing pleasure and happiness, as an attitude to confront the burden and frustration of our short existence. As a matter of fact, the main two reasons subjacent to losing control of our lifestyle are the hedonic brain along with the elision of traditional knowledge. In situations of stress evolving into frustration or anxiety, the hedonic brain is always offering a quick and short-lasting feeling of pleasure through altering momentarily the brain biochemistry using sugared foods or drinks, alcohol included, or drugs. Glucose and insulin, increase the concentration of dopamine, the neurotransmitter responsible for the activation of the reward centres located near the front of the brain. Other substances capable to increase dopamine concentrations in the brain are cocaine, heroin, alcohol, and methamphetamine. Therefore, sugar and alcohol share the same neurological mechanisms to produce cravings as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. And, consequently, the same physical and psychological suffering, called withdrawal syndrome, happens when trying to limit sugar intake.

Withdrawal is the price to recover the brain balance between dopamine concentration and dopamine receptors. During the time of withdrawal, many people learn an important lesson: pleasure doesn't mean happiness. It seems obvious but for some people, always under stress, running or fighting, it is very difficult to widen the peripheral vision range to see the big picture and realize that pleasure is momentary and more expensive every time. Conversely, happiness is not addictive, lasting longer than pleasure, and mediated by a neurotransmitter different from dopamine, called serotonin. Likewise, there is not possible an overdose of happiness since there is never too much serotonin.

## 2. The solution

### Traditional Culture, a Caretaker

Another aspect that kept humanity alive was the accumulation of generational wisdom in what we call traditional cultures. Wisdom was acquired and transmitted in cultural containers helping people to adapt to a determined environment or way of life, such as, for example, the extreme conditions of the desert or the nomadic life. Sometimes, the “art of health” was an independent entity within a wider culture, a specific category such as the ancient Greek concept of *hygieinē*, the origin of *hygiene*, or the classic Chinese concept of *yang sheng*, meaning *nurturing life*. Still now, people living in countries located in the Far East and Mediterranean regions are among those with a higher lifespan, such as Hongkong, Japan, Korea, Spain, Italy, and Greece, to mention a few found in the top-10 countries with a higher life expectancy. And the most surprising is that those countries health expense is significantly lower compared to the cost of health in the USA, Switzerland, Singapore or Macao, and the results in lifespan are virtually the same.

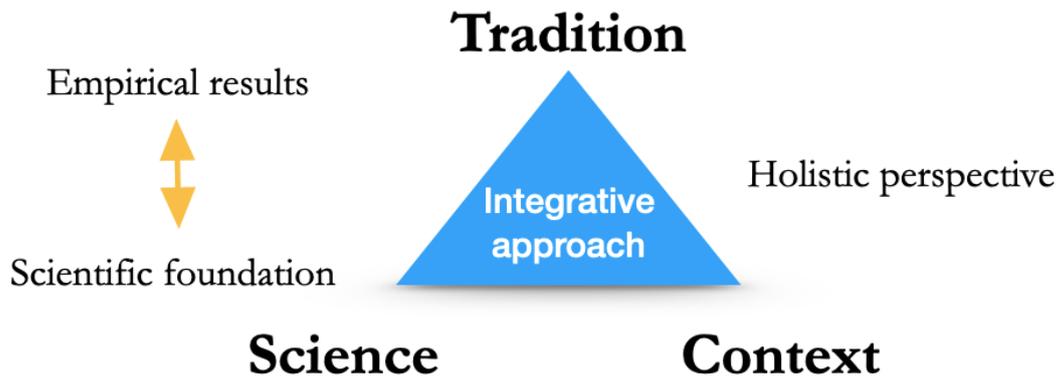
What is the secret? In our opinion, traditions in those countries still hold.

Conversely, in 2021, the World’s life expectancy ranking, shows the USA in the 46th position, right after Cuba, being the country with the highest health expenditure per capita<sup>8,9</sup>.

How does this happen? Because in the USA, traditional cultures are minoritarian and irrelevant for most of the population.

The worst case is that a toxic lifestyle is being adopted by most of the world countries, except for those dying from starvation.

In summary, most traditional cultures created a method to optimize coexisting with nature and preserving health. It is true that the discoveries made in the 19th century and the technological advances that happened in the following 100 years, mostly sanitation and civil engineer, kept people safer from infections and protected from extreme weather changes. Modern life greatly improved health, quality of life and therefore increased lifespan. However, it seems that humans could not find the golden middle point and the cost of technological wellbeing is losing the bond with nature. A new urban lifestyle enters in contradiction with the old ways and humans abandon progressively traditions since traditional cultures seemed not to be useful anymore. The disconnection from nature and from the ancestral knowledge that was accumulated during human evolution has brought new problems that most of us are not prepared to solve. Therefore, helping people find the golden way and the middle point between nature and progress has become our purpose.



## Harmonia's Mission and Vision

Harmonia is a wellbeing and longevity system, scientifically validated and based upon Far East & Mediterranean traditional cultures. Harmonia's approach is holistic, and its implementation is always individualised, based on each person's physical structure, age, sex, condition, and commitment.

Therefore, Harmonia's mission is transmitting and guiding those willing to be guided, to embrace the journey towards an optimal state of health. Harmonia is about longevity and quality of life. Adding health to the present, adds time to the future.

Our vision is to create a network of wellbeing havens and wellbeing journeys to transform each retreat into an everlasting body and soul memory.

## The philosophy behind the method

Harmonia was created after years of first-level practice and academic research. This system was originally meant to be a simple, adaptable, and comprehensive solution based on traditional Asian methods, to be implemented in resorts. Our purpose was helping to preserve and foster health but using local products and the therapeutic implements available in the establishment, such as spas and fitness centres. The result is an efficient, systematic, and non-dogmatic, integrative discipline, possible to incorporate into the daily routine. Moreover, the physical environment in which Harmonia has been developed, stresses the importance of beauty and service excellency to consider the experience as an attractive option for an exciting and healthy holiday.

Ten years after, the volume of information gathered, filtered, and indexed around Harmonia's core of tradition and nature, makes it possible to cover most of the aspects of the human being, from physical to spiritual, and capable to assess, follow-up and guide our dear clients to an optimal state of wellbeing.

## Harmonia's delivery: retreats, Welljourns and routine support

The central idea of Harmonia's vision is to help people to transit from the actual state of health to the optimum state of wellbeing.

Measuring those parameters adapted to each person's age, sex, physical condition, activity, and predisposition, requires a well-trained team constantly aware of the latest discoveries in science. The most difficult part is to convince our clients to change the hierarchy of priorities and invest first in wellbeing, health included. This is most of the time a long-term task that requires trust and mutual understanding to conciliate our client's life dynamics and the healthiest lifestyle. It is important to help our clients to reorganise their lifestyle and make feasible changes, with an attitude closer to giving a hand than giving a push.

Therefore, our goal is:

*Actual to optimal*

And the implementation of each individualised programme must be designed under three basic principles:

*Information, Repetition, Motivation*

Information: permanent access to high-quality information, filtered according to every person needs and conditions. Information needs to be true, indexed (ordered according to the degree of difficulty), contextualised (according to personal circumstance) and accessible (easy to understand and easy to find). Information acquisition is a process that requires a guided intervention or mentorship, such happened in traditions.

Repetition: repeating which is good and healthy for the body awakens the consciousness and overcomes resistances of our homeostatic brain. In short, repetition helps to tune in happiness and retain it for a longer period. Online activities, such as follow-ups, consultations, and classes, are a practical way to insist on repetition, but our retreats and private travelling experiences (welljourns) are the most effective activities to achieve a successful healthy lifestyle adoption.

Motivation: one of the pillars of motivation is feasibility. All our plans and road books are progressive and possible to achieve because the client actively participates in the planning and adaptation process. The objectives also must be realistic to work as a motivator, such as increasing the level of fitness, inspiration, body metabolism and general health. Together with the right information and repetition, motivation is the energy that helps to achieve and maintain the objectives and health benefits.

The benefits from the long-term adoption of Harmonia surpasses achieving a healthier condition but the change towards a consistent mindset more interested in happiness than pleasure. In fact, it is only at this point, halfway between homeostasis and hedonism, that human beings are free to decide what is better for each moment. People thinking that carrying out an unhealthy lifestyle is an expression of free-will are wrong, since a brain addicted to immediate pleasure and prisoner of rewarding is not free to decide.

## Harmonia Method

Harmonia is based on Asian and Mediterranean health traditions, supported by ancestral wisdom, knowledge, and adaptation to different environments. Francesc followed classical Traditional Chinese Medicine training, internship, and postgraduate training in China, studied the degree of physiotherapy, different types of manual therapy techniques, such as Shiatsu, Sotai, Thai massage, and approached other traditional medical disciplines, such as traditional Indonesian medicine (Jamu), and traditional Japanese medicine (Kampo).

On the other hand, Francesc's responsibilities as the academic director of the European Foundation of Traditional Chinese Medicine, lead him towards the combination of Western and Asian traditional disciplines, called nowadays "integrative" medicine. This focus of interest crystallised as the first Master of Integrative Chinese Medicine, together with the *World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies* (WFCMS), held in Barcelona in 2013, in which Francesc took the responsibility of leading the translation and editing of the materials. The conclusions of this titanic endeavour stressed the importance of providing a scientific background for effective traditional methods and remedies. In this way, tradition, the inheritance of humanity, can be revisited and actualised according to the new advances in biology, pharmacology, and medicine.

Firstly, implemented in Mauritius, at the *One&Only Le Saint Géran*, Harmonia was mainly acclaimed as a wellbeing and longevity system, individualised, and covered diet, physical exercise, mindfulness, and meditation, assisted by a therapeutical menu of treatments designed to accelerate the harmonisation process. Nearly 10 years after, the system remains unaltered but more effective and varied. To quickly understand Harmonia, Francesc distinguishes four basic aspects (also called domains or bodies) of living beings: physical, energy or metabolism, mind/emotions, and soul. Therefore, different therapies and interventions are developed to harmonise each aspect and favour the interaction between them.

For instance, the *physical domain*, or the anatomic body, supports the other aspects. Therefore, the posture, alignment, flexibility, strength, resistance, and weight of the physical body are essential aspects to keep the optimal functionality of this body. Individualised physical training exercises and plans, and support (recorded and available online) activities are developed together with postural harmonisation, such

as alignment techniques, stretching and flowing, all based on physiotherapy, Rolfing, osteopathy, and other manual therapies. Functional tests to assess the present and optimal wellbeing condition are also developed to observe these parameters. However, in Harmonia retreats, fitness activities are not the only actions to increase energy expenditure. Free outdoor and “playground” activities, conveniently measured and adapted, are always present in our retreats.

The *metabolic aspect*, also called the energy domain, includes all the functions that animate cells, energy acquiring and eliminating, protection, distribution, the transmission of information, reproduction, and maintenance of the physical domain. The intervention in this domain is the most difficult and dense. For instance, individualised nutritional layouts, specific diets, supplementation of herbal products if necessary, and teas are designed to work in synergy with specific and unique Spa treatments and body therapies using, temperature, colour, sound, and taste. Breathe mastering therapies are the backbone of the integration of the metabolic aspect with the physical and mental-emotional. All these activities are delivered daily in our retreats.

The *mental-emotional domain* is highly influenced by the material support (physical body) and the functional aspects of the energy domain. The nervous system and the hedonic tendencies of our brain are the main objects of harmonisation here. Guided relaxation, under low environment stimuli, neural equalisation therapies, mindfulness along with integrative breathing workout, Qi Gong exercises, visualisation, and deep relaxation experiences. Inducing deep sleep is one of the pillars of our metabolism and, consequently, towards health and longevity. All the previous aspects directly influence the deep sleep achievement and therefore, improving those will revert to better metabolism and regeneration. Moreover, an important starting point in the individualised Harmonia programme is the organisation of the retreat activities and fasting/intake periods around the circadian cycle (day-night individual cycle), which in turn is determined by the deep sleep periods.

The *domain of the soul* is the consequence of the alignment of the previous and denser ones. One of the characteristics of spirituality is the capacity of enjoying the beauty present in our daily life, nature, and people’s actions, to mention a few. From a free and harmonious mindset is very easy to increase empathy and allow the natural beauty that surrounds us to resonate inside. Love is everywhere and love is beauty. When people are too busy and far from alignment are barely capable to resonate with the invisible love and beauty network present mostly everywhere. The Harmonia team guidance, a beautiful environment, the right food and activity, meditation and good quality sleep are catalysers of the human alignment that brings empathy, inspiration, acknowledgement, love, and happiness.

## Harmonia's transmission and delivery

### **Transmission**

As Harmonia is growing bigger every day, the system goes under constant update and content development.

The transmission of Harmonia's method, both at expert and client levels, consists of a set of seminars, workshops, lectures, and readings. The most stable core of Harmonia is materialised in our book "Kusuimun", available for the general public, and more in-depth Harmonia technical training, oriented to therapists and facilitators.

In parallel, the main concepts of Kusuimun are summarised in a series of online materials, that offers a quick approach to the general concept.

### **Delivery**

Harmonia is a system implemented to be delivered in retreats and supported by online follow-up. For the moment, Harmonia is developing delivering nomadic experiences, which are the retreats and the Welljourns.

#### Retreats

Retreats are 7-10 days of intensive programs, held in different parts of the world, mostly gorgeous resorts, in which a specific version of Harmonia is developed. Normally, the main core of the retreat is a physical, mental and energy detox, upgraded with the special talent of an expert. Therefore, different types of retreats could be exemplified as detox and breathing, detox and alignment, detox and exercise, detox and meditation, and so. In this case, detox means mostly harmonising the body, releasing negative emotions, excessive weight, and toxins. In retreats, the Harmonia main therapist receives the synergies of an expert in a complementary subject, such as breathing and alignment, postural integration, meditation, and physical activity.

#### Welljourns

Welljourns are 7–10-day experiences offered to families or limited groups (6 people maximum). These journeys are oriented to explore ancestral cultures oriented to health, spirituality, and wellbeing, educating us to coexist with nature through strengthening our inner connection. Examples of welljourns are the traditional geothermal detox program in Japan, called The Land to Fire and Water, or the Bhutanese journey around nature and meditation, called Snow Land Natur-tation. Other exciting experiences in India, New Zealand and Indonesia are in development too.

The objective of Welljourns is to capture our clients' family leisure time and transform a holiday into a life-changing experience through cultural, spiritual, outdoor fun, and daily boosting-health activities.

### The Estate of Harmony

Since the beginning of Harmonia's project, the idea of developing a network of establishments to spread the concept has been always present. The layout is simple, a boutique size establishment and rustic aesthetic, where privacy, personalisation and efficacy can be ensured in a harmonious and inspiring environment. This type of Inns of Harmony would serve as decentralised hubs supporting the same concept but expressing the local taste.

This network would make it easier to train and develop talent involved in the project, establishing a network of preferential members, a network of inspiring collaborators, the implementation of basic permaculture and renewable energetic program towards food and energy autonomy, among many other ideas.

The idea is different from the typical business models. This project should not be thinking about achieving the highest ratio of occupancy possible because it is just a matter of time that the network would reach a high demand. On the other hand, this solution is ideal for real estate investors that hold unused properties wishing to benefit from partnering with this project.

### **Partnerships**

Harmonia is completing its preliminary development stage and ready to be transmitted and spread through the world. Partnerships regarding resorts and hotels to organise retreats are welcome. Our intention is co-organising an international wellbeing retreat catalogue for our guest.

Also, we are interested in hearing from potential local partners eager to organise welljourns and private traveling. Mostly people with similar ideas and regarding destinations that still retain a soul.

Finally, we are interested in partnerships willing to implement our system full-time in their properties. The creation of different Estates of Harmony as nodes of a longstanding, dynamic, and healthy network is our dream too.

## Project Timeline

2022

Summer: retreats in the Maldives

October: Japan's Welljourns

All year: preparing training and finishing the book.

2023

Winter: launching of the book Kusuimun

Winter: beginning Harmonia training therapists

Spring: retreat in Spain

Spring: launching website

Spring: New welljourns in India and Bhutan

Summer and autumn: retreats in Switzerland, Japan, Maldives

2024

Spring: medical testing agreements in London, Zurich, Barcelona

Launching an online longevity program

Opening The Estate of Harmony

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