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"The Secret" teacher sets guide to "Harmonic Wealth"

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By Lisa Von Ahn

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NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - In the best-selling spiritual self-help program "The Secret," James Arthur Ray likens the universe to a genie who sees every firmly held thought and feeling as a command to be obeyed.

But that's not all that success and fulfillment are about, the motivational speaker and entrepreneur writes in his new book, "Harmonic Wealth" -- in which he compares life to an orchestra.

Ray, 50, was one of 23 people interviewed in "The Secret," which has sold 9 million copies and is available on CD and DVD. Its premise, that people can think and feel their way to health, happiness and success, has generated controversy as well as praise.

Ray says the concept works, but is often misunderstood.

"The romantics want to watch "The Secret" and think, "Well, I can think about something, visualize it, feel good about it and sit in my living room, and it's going to happen," he said.

"It doesn't. They'll come take your furniture away."

Ray emphasizes the need to take action toward a desired outcome as well as thinking about and feeling it.

"How would a person with the perfect body act?" he asked an audience of about 400 people in a Manhattan hotel to publicize the book. His answer: "Push away the cheesecake and hit the gym."

The two-hour event was free, although copies of the book were sold and some people signed up for his weekend seminars.

"It's part of my marketing strategy," he said, adding that he told his publisher that he didn't want to go the traditional route of doing signings in stores.

"I don't see that as a good use of my time," he said.

And time management is important. After telling members of the audience to write down the annual income they want, he said \$100,000 a year equaled about \$50 an hour, allowing for time off on weekends and a two-week vacation.

But if someone watches television for four hours a day, three hours less than the national average, "you might as well take off June and July."

The book also focuses on the physical, mental, spiritual and relational aspects of life.

The son of a Protestant minister, Ray refers often to his studies of spiritual traditions around the world, from the Q'ero Indians of Peru to the mystery schools of Egypt.

He also heads Carlsbad, California-based James Ray International, which he describes as a multimillion-dollar corporation.

Although many have taught the need for a balanced life, Ray takes a different view.

"Balance is baloney," he said. "When everything's balanced, nothing happens. There's no vitality."

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He believes life should be like a band, with one instrument in the lead, but all playing together to create music.

"Harmonic Wealth" suggests meditation, diet, exercise, goal-setting and other steps to enhance the five aspects of life. Ray admits that not everyone is happy about working for success, but says it is the only way to get positive results.

"I haven't met one person who's achieving anything who isn't busy," he said. "To think otherwise is just going to lead us into frustration and failure."

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