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# The Wellness Questionnaire with We Care Spa's Susan Lombardi

## GET TO KNOW THE OWNER AND CEO OF WE CARE SPA



Julie Keller Callaghan  
January 5, 2024(<https://welldefined.com/2024/01/05/>)

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Susan Lombardi is the owner and CEO of **We Care Spa** (<http://www.wecarespa.com/>), a 20-acre desert oasis in Desert Hot Spring, CA, with transformative retreat options that include luxury accommodations with uninterrupted desert vistas, 40-plus spa treatments, daily nutrition and yoga classes, evening sound baths, and weekly fire ceremonies.

We Care Spa was founded by the very heart-centered Susana Belen more than 40 years ago with three rooms in her house, to help heal people after her own healing journey. Thirty-five years ago, her daughter Susan Lombardi joined to help grow the business. The resort was

recently transformed into a luxury detox spa resort oasis with a sleek design, Buddhist and Hindu statues, large crystals, and other artistic elements. The property completed a full design transformation in 2022 and now features 28 beautiful accommodations, each with deep soaking tubs and a range of amenities.

"I have been gifted the amazing opportunity to work alongside my mom, Susana Belen, for almost forty years," says Lombardi. "She created an incredible program to detoxify your body, revitalize your mind, and restore your spirit in the early 1980s. At the time I was studying business and fashion in Paris, but in 1986 she asked me to come home and look at the health center she was running out of her house in the desert. There was so much opportunity for growth, to help more and more people through expansion and elevated hospitality. I've been here ever since. I love the progress we've made as a company, and the impact we have on the lives of our guests."

Here, she shares her healthiest practices.

### **What are your favorite things to do to maintain your personal wellbeing?**

I guess I have a really balanced approach, and that's thanks to my mom and what she taught us growing up. I fast one day every week for my physical health. When I can, there's nothing like the three-week fast. You really hum along and are at such an elevated level of clarity and calm, but you need to dedicate everything you're doing in those three weeks to the fast, and that's not always easy. On a daily basis, my go-to is a long bath at night with my favorite essential oils, a detoxifying bath salt, and I always incorporate some tapping on meridian points (EFT). That's how I recenter after the day.

### **What is your favorite healthy beverage (alcoholic or non-alcoholic), and do you have any insider tips for preparing it?**

Growing up, I remember my mom trying all these new-age modalities, therapies, and recipes years before they were the norm. One thing she really got me on was green juice; any way to get a day's worth of vegetables, vitamins, and minerals in one drink was perfect.

- ½ an avocado
- 1 orange, peeled
- 1 cup of fresh pineapple
- 2 large handfuls of kale

- The juice of one lemon
- 1 cup of filtered water (I use an alkaline water from a Kangen filter)
- 1 tablespoon of We Care Green Food, our vitamin- and mineral-rich greens powder (spinach, ashwagandha, apple fiber, and wheatgrass).
- I blend everything together in a Vitamix on high until it is smooth and creamy, and that's how I start my day.

### **What is your greatest wellness achievement?**

It's We Care Spa. What my mom and I had the opportunity to build goes way beyond a business or a physical property. What this program has done, and I see it day after day, is change people's lives. When I'm looking at our reservation list and I see someone's name and that they've been here 20 or 30 times, it means we are doing something real and profound for them. That's the achievement for me, it doesn't matter how small we are or how big we grow, as long as we are making a positive, life-changing difference in the health of our guests, we are doing the right thing.

### **What person in wellness do you most admire and why?**

My mom is amazing. Her vitality and desire for life and helping and healing people amazes me. Even as a child, my mom would be doing all these crazy, quirky things, and my friends would come over and say, "what is your mother doing now?" She just has such a desire to help, and she's been such a great role model in her pioneering through this. Even in the times where it was not very fun to do, and it wasn't the "in" thing to do. We got a lot of "no thank yous," which is hard as a business owner. But that never made her think any differently about it, and she just kept pushing forward. She is in her 80s and still completely involved. She teaches all the classes, dances tango, and does yoga. She travels—visiting ruins in Peru and Egypt. She's really out-doing me! She's my mom and she's amazing, and I love her.

### **What do you think is the most exciting wellness innovation you have recently discovered?**

I've been really interested in the connection between our day-to-day technology and sleep. What I've learned about the harmful effects of blue light, our phones, and our circadian rhythm, it's been fascinating. Recently at We Care Spa and in my house, I installed a circadian lighting system. As humans, we've evolved to know that when the sky is blue, it's time to be alert and awake, so in the morning these lights have a soft blue tint, just enough to suppress

melatonin production and make waking up easier. Then in the evening, the lights shift to a soft gold, like sunset, and that's what triggers melatonin production, so you can settle into rest-mode. After three or four nights, you realize you're sleeping better, and it's all because of your overhead lights.

### **What is your idea of balanced healthy happiness?**

For me, health has to accompany joy and beauty. That's just the way I'm wired. Years ago, I had a cancer diagnosis that dragged me through sterile hospitals, with cold metal and an overwhelming smell of bleach. When you're in that environment, that's not healthy living. I'm thankful every day that I got through that situation, but it is entirely what inspired me to make sure We Care was as vibrant, serene, and alive as possible. Being in harmony with nature, and surrounded by beauty, and feeling healthy, that is balanced happiness.

### **What do you think is the most overused word or words in wellness?**

Well, it's interesting because we've been doing this for so long. Before there was even a word for an industry that encompassed gut health, meditation, mindfulness, spa treatments, and so-on. In the 1980s when We Care started, green juice was "woo-woo," and fasting was so fringe. Today, you're breaking your intermittent fast with a green juice before you go to yoga class! But really, I mean I guess the word "wellness" is a little overused. It's like an amenity, an ideal, a checkbox, that a lot of hotels, restaurants, even office spaces are adding, and it's like, "Ok, we added a water filter to the sink, now let's say we are wellness-focused." I've never heard my mom talk about wellness like it's a one-and-done. It's evolving and multi-faceted.

### **Do you have a secret health or wellness tip you would like to share?**

The secret is that you are what you digest, not what you eat! One thing we all have in common is that we're all eating (unless you're at We Care Spa), but so much of the food in our diet, even if you're totally plant-based, is derived of natural enzymes. Your body has its own enzymes that it uses to digest food, and our food has its own enzymes that help it be digested. Unfortunately, modern farming and agriculture strips these enzymes away, so no matter what I'm eating, I always take one or two of We Care's plant-based Food N-Zymes with every meal. They're an easy, organic way to supplement the enzymes that should be in our food, so our bodies can optimize digestion and not be sluggish or bloated.

### **What is your favorite place for a healthy vacation or escape?**

When I take time away for a vacation, it's never a big city. I always look for sunshine, clean air, usually a beach, and a great collection of local restaurants. I love the Amalfi Coast, St. Tropez, and Bali. I'm really interested in Blue Zones, where people are able to live longer and healthier lives.

## About The Author

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### **Julie Keller Callaghan** (<https://welldefined.com/wd-authors/julie-keller-callaghan/>)

Julie is the co-founder of Well Defined and a longtime influencer and advocate in the wellness world. Along with her work at Well Defined, she is an executive recruiter and marketing specialist for Hutchinson Consulting. She is also a consultant and content strategist for numerous wellness brands. She is the former editor-in-chief and publisher of *American Spa* and was named a 2019 Folio Top Woman in Media in the Industry Trailblazers category and a 2018 winner of ISPA's Innovate Award. She is also a seasoned journalist, specializing in spa, travel, health, fitness, wellness, sustainability, and beauty. She has been published in *Departures*, *ForbesTraveler.com*, *E! Online*, *Gayot.com*, *Insider's Guide to Spas*, *Luxury Travel Advisor*, *Marin Magazine*, *Ocean Home*, *Smart Meetings*, *Spa Asia*, and *Travel Agent*.

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