

FALL 2016



# Mind and Matter



A publication of the University of Miami Faculty and Staff Assistance Program

## FACULTY AND STAFF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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## IN THIS EDITION

### FEELING SAFE IN AN UNSAFE WORLD

*by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW  
in Featured Article*

### OCTOBER IS DEPRESSION AWARENESS MONTH

*in Mental Health Corner*

### MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS

*in Featured Seminar*

# FEELING SAFE IN AN UNSAFE WORLD

by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW

To say that we are living in a time of uncertainty is an understatement. It seems that the frequency and force of natural and man-made disasters is greater than at any other time one can remember. To make matters worse we are often exposed to constant media coverage of the events as they unfold, leading many to walk around in a state of shock, disbelief and despair.

The question then is, how do we restore a sense of safety and meaning to our lives in the face of recent domestic and world events? Psychologist Melanie Greenberg, Ph.D., author of *The Stress-Proof Brain: Master Your Emotional Response to Stress Using Mindfulness and Neuroplasticity* offers the following suggestions:

**Accept your feelings** - Allow yourself time to feel sad, upset or angry. These are normal reactions. It's important to realize that events of this magnitude take time to process.

**Return to your usual routine** - Limit the time you spend watching news coverage of the events. Focus on getting enough sleep, eating healthy food, exercising, spending time with family and friends and engaging in activities you enjoy.

**Create a mental safe place** - Focus on creating a pleasant, peaceful, relaxing place in your mind to help you let go of stress and tension. Direct your attention to each of your senses as you enter this special place you have created.

**Treat yourself with self-compassion** - Don't push your feelings aside instead treat yourself with tenderness. Engage in activities that are self-nurturing, such as a bath, getting a massage, etc.

**Create a narrative** - Writing helps to organize and integrate our thoughts, and helps to accept your own experiences and place them in context, in perspective. This helps to see the meaning of events and helps to create meaning in your life. Focus on how you found out about the event, the details and feelings it elicited.

**Turn to the positive** - While recent events may often lead one to believe that the world is full of hate and suffering it also contains a lot that is positive and good. Turn your focus on all that is right in your life, your family and community at large. Reflect on the freedom, rights and opportunities you enjoy that many in other parts of the world do not. Look into your personal strengths and coping strategies that have served you in the past.

**Be grateful** - Think about those individuals in your life that have helped you to become the person you are today. Take time to write them a letter to let them know how much you appreciate them. Visit them and read them the letter or offer them a gift as a demonstration of affection.

**Engage in something constructive** - Channel your feelings into positive activities to help improve the situation. Volunteer at a local shelter, write letters to your local politicians to lobby for needed societal changes. Taking action often helps to combat feelings of helplessness and can actually contribute to increase a sense of safety in the world.

**Seek social support** - Reach out to those people who will allow you to talk about your feelings and who will listen without judgment. Avoid those who minimize your feelings and rush you to "get over it". Research shows that seeking social support following a traumatic event is one of the most important factors in preventing post-traumatic stress disorder.



**IF YOU FIND YOURSELF HAVING DIFFICULTY FACING LIFE'S UNCERTAINTIES, WE CAN HELP.**  
SCHEDULE A FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT TO MEET WITH A FSAP CONSULTANT BY CALLING 305-284-6604.

## OCTOBER: DEPRESSION AWARENESS MONTH

Do you feel very tired, helpless, and hopeless? Are you sad most of the time and take no pleasure in your family, friends, or hobbies? Are you having trouble working, sleeping, eating and functioning? Have you felt this way for a long time? If so, you may be suffering from depression.

### Facts about depression:

- An estimated 1 in 10 U.S. adults report depression (CDC).
- Major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. for people ages 15-44. (World Health Organization, 2004).
- According to the World Health Organization, depression is projected to become the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease by 2020.
- Depression is a common mental disorder. Globally, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression. (WHO).

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health and [mentalhealthscreening.org](http://mentalhealthscreening.org)

**THE FACULTY AND STAFF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS OFFERING A DEPRESSION SCREENING THE MONTH OF OCTOBER TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY.**

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO UTILIZE THIS BENEFIT BY CONTACTING OUR OFFICE AT (305) 284-6604 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT FOR A CONFIDENTIAL ASSESSMENT.**

## FEATURED SEMINAR STAYING SANE IN AN INSANE WORLD

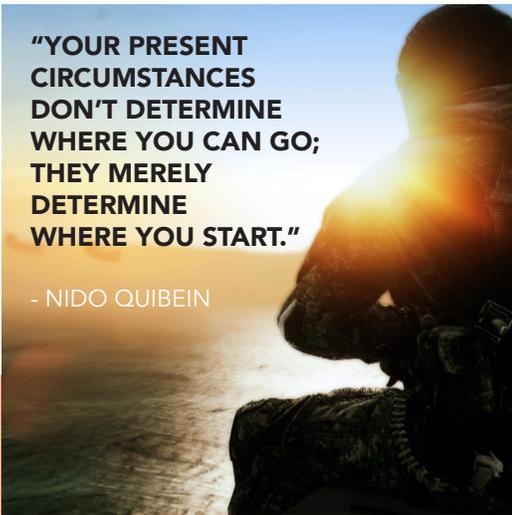
Multiple work, family and social demands can take their toll on one's emotional wellbeing and often lead to our feeling vulnerable, wondering how we will cope and manage it all. So much of our time and energy is spent attending to the needs of others that we forget to care for ourselves. This seminar is offered for those interested in exploring positive, proactive strategies to reclaim, cultivate and nourish their sanity.

**October 5-7, 2016**

This seminar will be facilitated by a UM FSAP consultant. FSAP Health and Wellness seminars are offered as part of the University of Miami's Well 'Canes Program.

### ADDITIONAL UPCOMING SEMINARS

Developing Emotional Fortitude and Resilience | Mindful Living | Breaking Bad Habits



**"YOUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES DON'T DETERMINE WHERE YOU CAN GO; THEY MERELY DETERMINE WHERE YOU START."**

- NIDO QUIBEIN

## DID YOU KNOW?

The FSAP ensures strict confidentiality as governed by State Mental Health Law and Federal Regulations to protect clients. No information regarding an employee's participation in the FSAP is released unless the employee/client authorizes the release in writing or mandated by law due to a threat of harm to oneself, or to others.

Consultations are rendered in on-site private office locations to ensure the comfort and privacy of the clients who are served.

## SUBSCRIBE

*Mind and Matter* is a quarterly publication from the UM Faculty and Staff Assistance Program that provides helpful tips and articles regarding work-life balance, health and well-being.

If you would like to receive this newsletter directly in your inbox each quarter, as well as announcements about upcoming FSAP seminars, please send an email to [cbootle@miami.edu](mailto:cbootle@miami.edu).