

# Mind and Matter

A publication of the University of Miami Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)

Spring 2013

## The Path to Health and Wellbeing

by Orlando J. Gonzalez, MSED, LMHC, CEAP

The beginning of each year, for most, is a time of introspective examination regarding how we live our lives. Should we do more to care for our health? Are we satisfied with the quality of our relationships? Are we in the right job or profession? Do we have a viable long term financial plan? What exactly will make our lives more satisfying or fulfilling?

Relief for these concerns commonly surfaces by way of New Year's resolutions which, although well intentioned, are frequently not well thought out, executed or maintained. Although they vary in scope, at their root, resolutions aim to better our wellbeing in some way. Achieving a "balanced" life is what most of us appear to desire, but making a balanced life actionable in our busy and complex culture is all too often an elusive proposition. What, after all, does balance mean? And, how do we know when it's achieved?

When considering the degree to which our lives lack balance, it may be helpful to evaluate which of the dimensions of wellness (see wellness wheel) we feel are in need of some attention.



The path to health and wellbeing is paved with small, but significant, steps of healthier decision making and the daily renewal of a commitment to one's health. For example, choosing to improve along the "Physical" dimension might mean committing to taking brisk walks, or any aerobic activity of your choice, for a minimum of 30 minutes daily. There are many benefits that can be derived from such activity which include improved mood, pain relief, improved sleep, as well as the acceleration of the healing process, to name simply a few. Committing to the gradual incorporation of "simple" action steps for each dimension, and setting up structures which support new behaviors, will maintain us on our path to health and wellbeing.

### Things to remember as you set out on your path:

- Changing a lifestyle takes time
- Doing too much too fast leads to burnout and you are more likely to stop
- Do it with a friend or group (motivation and accountability)
- Some days, weeks, or months are harder – try your best during difficult times and get back on track as soon as possible
- Never lose sight of the long term goal – A Healthier You!
- Small changes add up
- Cheat every once in a while if you need to – if a program is too rigid, you will be less likely to follow through long enough to make it part of your lifestyle
- There is no such thing as a quick fix

### Learn more at a lunch and learn seminar:

RSMAS Campus	Coral Gables Campus	Medical Campus
January 29 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. RSMAS Library Map and Chart Room	January 30 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. McKnight Building 2nd Floor, Training Room	January 31 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Dominion Parking Garage Room 155

## Upcoming Lunchtime Seminars

Home Health Care 101

Developing Your Path to Health and Wellbeing

Nurturing Healthy Relationships

Gaining Control of Emotional Eating

Relaxation Training

The Path to Resiliency

Visit [www.miami.edu/fsap](http://www.miami.edu/fsap) and click on "Schedule of Seminars" for details.

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# Gaining Control of Emotional Eating

by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW

Have you ever sought solace in a pint of ice cream or a bag of chips? If you have, then you know that food can be comforting. Comfort foods are those foods individuals consume to obtain or maintain a feeling, says Brain Wansink, PhD, Director of the Food and Brand Lab at the University of Illinois. As you may have guessed, ice cream is first on the list. Interestingly enough comfort food preferences break down by gender: women prefer chocolate and cookies, men prefer pizza, steak and casserole.

We all eat when we are bored, happy, angry or sad, however if this is the main way one manages these emotions you might be engaging in emotional eating. According to Jane Jakubczak, a registered dietitian at the University of Maryland, "Emotional eating is eating for other reasons other than hunger. Instead of the physical symptom of hunger initiating the eating, an emotion triggers the eating". This type of eating often leads to eating too much, especially high-calorie, sweet, fatty foods which sabotage weight-loss efforts. Major life events and stressors of everyday life can trigger negative emotions that can lead to emotional eating. These triggers may include: unemployment, financial pressure, health problems, relationship conflicts, work-related stress, bad weather, and fatigue to name a few. Whatever emotions lead you to overeat, the unhealthy cycle is the same, the emotions trigger the overeating, you feel shame and guilt and you overeat again.

The good news is that there are many strategies one can use to manage and overcome emotional eating. Try these tips:

- Learn to tame your stress
- Have a hunger reality check
- Keep a food diary
- Fight boredom
- Take away temptation
- Snack healthy

Learn more at a lunch and learn seminar:

Coral Gables Campus	RSMAS Campus	Medical Campus
March 19 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. McKnight Building 2nd Floor, Training Room	March 20 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. RSMAS Library Map and Chart Room	March 21 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Dominion Parking Garage Room 155

Source: "Emotional Eating: Feeding Your Feelings" by Heather Hatfield

## Relaxation Technique

Use diaphragmatic deep breathing to breathe in peace and breathe out stress.

**Here's How:**

1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes, but keep your back straight, shoulders relaxed, head up, your eyes (behind your lids) focused ahead.
3. Take a deep, cleansing breath, expanding your belly and keeping your shoulders relaxed, and hold it in for the count of six. Exhale, and repeat twice more. Then breathe normally, and focus your attention on your breathing. As you breathe, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, still expanding your belly rather than moving your shoulders up and down.
4. If your thoughts drift toward the stresses of the day ahead or of the day behind you, gently refocus on your breathing and remain in the present moment. Feel the air move in, and feel the air move out. That's it.
5. Continue this for as little or as long as you like, and you should notice that your body is more relaxed and your mind is more centered.
6. Enjoy the rest of your day!

**What You Need:**

\*A quiet place

\*A few minutes

\*A willing mind

Source: <http://stress.about.com/od/generaltechniques/ht/howtoimagery.htm>



## Inspirational Quote

*"No matter how long the winter, spring is sure to follow."*

- Proverb

## 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 receive announcements of upcoming FSAP seminars, please send an email to [cbootle@miami.edu](mailto:cbootle@miami.edu).

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