

SPRING 2019

# Mind and Matter



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

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BY ORLANDO GONZALEZ, MSEd, LMHC, CEAP  
IN FEATURED ARTICLE

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# Resolve to Broaden Your Perspective

by Orlando Gonzalez, MEd, LMHC, CEAP

FEATURED  
ARTICLE

The beginning of each year is typically welcomed with a spirit of contemplation and self-review. In search of solutions to personal challenges, we commonly embark on changes meant to better our lives. These changes (e.g. working out, getting on a healthy nutritional plan, meeting up with friends more frequently, etc.) are typically geared to directly influence our physical and emotional well-being. But, they may also (indirectly) affect our mindsets, although that aim is rarely the main reason we set out to make such changes. This year, I challenge each of us to target shifting our mindsets directly. Practice occasional re-sets of perspective to view the world from standpoints that are not exclusively our own and develop objectivity around positions that have previously blocked us, or kept us entrenched in self-limiting rigidity.

Our personal interpretations of any given life event plays into how we perceive each of these lived experiences. We essentially assess experiences through our own personal filters. Those accustomed to holding out judgment of what any given event means, make room for added meaning and fresh outcomes. Those of us prone to, “rushing to conclusions,” risk limiting outcomes and hasten misinterpreting the actions of others.

Developing objective perspective and curiosity around all life experiences (especially emotional ones) becomes vital to seeing things clearly, broadening response options and limiting harmful judgments.

This year, resolve to broaden your perspective. The next time you feel stymied by the actions of others, or stuck in a self-limiting viewpoint, try the following:

- 1) Stop what you are doing and sit for a moment to identify whatever thoughts, feelings and/or bodily sensations you may be experiencing at that moment.*
- 2) Expand your viewpoint, by imagining that you can actually observe yourself (and your situation) from an objective vantage point (outside of yourself). What are your thoughts from this, “bird’s-eye view,” vantage point about the person you see before you?*
- 3) Reflect on how you may be interacting with the other people directly affected by your situation. What are your thoughts about these interactions? How might things appear from their vantage point(s)?*
- 4) Reflect on the significance the particular situation in question may have on the rest of your life. What are your thoughts regarding its long-term importance?*
- 5) Consciously return your attention to where you are sitting and again check-in with your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations to evaluate how these might have changed as a consequence of exploring yourself from that objective standpoint.*

The above may, at first, seem a time consuming process. But, once you get good at what is essentially role reversal, you become expert at performing the above quickly; and in so doing enhance your emotional intelligence. These skills will serve you and others very well in the New Year, as they enable breath for new options in a complex world starved for understanding, compassion and flexibility.

The UM Faculty and Staff Assistance Program is staffed by Florida licensed mental health professional who offer UM employees confidential consultations sessions aimed at facilitating their desired changes, develop plans for making such changes a reality and offer support as they work through this process. Please do not



# Clarity. Connection. Comfort.



“Your Brain on Gratitude”

Gratitude is fertilizer for the mind, spreading connections and improving its function in nearly every realm of experience. According to neuroscientist Rick Hanson Ph.D, our brains take the shape our minds rest upon. Rest your mind upon worry, sadness, annoyance, and irritability and it will begin to take the shape neurally of anxiety, depression and anger. Ask your brain to give thanks and it will get better at finding things to be grateful for, and begin to take the shape of gratitude. Everything we do creates connections within networks of the brain, and the more you repeat something, the stronger those connections get. The mind can change the brain in lasting ways. In other words, what flows through the mind sculpts the brain.

Source: Robert A. Emmons, *The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a Life of Happiness and Well-being by Giving Thanks* (New York: Hachette, 2016), 26.





# 2019 The Year of Action!



“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

Albert Schweitzer

Welcome to the year of action! This section will be dedicated to the promotion of healthy habits and thoughts through suggestions, challenges and activities. We are starting off the year with the importance of keeping calm in the face of stressors.

## 1. Focus on breathing

Practice slow controlled breathing when you feel anxious. The breath can help to return you to the present moment and lower your stress level.

## 2. Exercise

Physical activity stimulates the production of endorphins. Researchers have found that just 40 minutes of exercise is enough to dramatically increase your mood.

## 3. Avoid asking “what if”

The more time you spend worrying about the endless possible outcomes, the longer you will spend fixating on feeling uncomfortable. Try to accept that some questions simply won't have an answer.

## 4. Focus on positives

Keep a go-to list of positives in mind so that you can immediately shift your attention towards them when your thoughts are negative. This will not only boost your mood but remind you of everything you can be grateful for.

## 5. Reject negative self-talk

Identifying and acknowledging any negative thoughts about yourself as merely thoughts and not facts, will help release you into a state of calm.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Proper breathing is an antidote to stress. Poorly oxygenated blood contributes to anxiety states, depression, and fatigue and makes each stressful situation many times harder to cope with. Proper breathing habits are essential for good mental and physical health. Make it a habit to engage in natural, full breathing on a regular basis.



## FEATURED SEMINAR

### Mindful Walking

*This month's seminar will focus on walking mindfully. Walking is a great way to integrate mindfulness into your everyday life and has been practiced as a meditative technique for thousands of years. Attend to awaken your innate capacity for mindful living and nurture a practice to positively inspire every facet of your life.*

**IMPORTANT:** Please bring comfortable walking shoes for this practice will take place outdoors.

**Week of January 28th**

**Earn 150 Pure Wellness points (to a maximum of 300 points per calendar year) when you attend an FSAP seminar.**

## UPCOMING SEMINARS

**First Time Homebuyers  
Loving Kindness Mindfulness  
The Power of Music  
Developing Resiliency and  
Emotional Fortitude  
Time to Relax**

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