



Mind and Matter



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

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Your Mindset Matters

by Pilar Tamburrino, M.S., LMHC, CEAP

How often have you heard someone say, “It’s just mind over matter?” Is this even true? Could you really change your stress level, or outlook, by simply changing your thoughts?

According to Dr. Alia Crum of Stanford University, a mindset is a lens, or way of viewing the world. “It is the lenses through which information is perceived, organized, and interpreted.” Your mind categorizes the vast amounts of information you receive every day and the many possible interpretations of what that information may mean. Think of your email inbox. Massive amounts of information in the form of emails come in every day. Your mind interprets the importance of each email and what the perceived consequences may, or may not be before responding to it in an appropriate manner. You organize your thoughts and send a response; choosing words and tone accordingly. Have you ever written an angry email and not sent it because you knew you weren’t in the right mindset when you wrote it? Once you were in a better mindset, you probably went back to compose a better email.

Psychologist and author of “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success,” Dr. Carol Dweck, coined the term “growth mindset” to explain the idea that an individual has the ability to reframe a situation to enable growth as a result of experience and learning. In contrast, an individual with a “fixed mindset” views his or her abilities, situation, or talents as irreversible. A fixed mindset inhibits growth because the individual feels helpless in his or her capacity to make changes. Adopting a growth mindset allows individuals to reframe the situation. The person is no longer powerless and has every opportunity to use experiences to strengthen his or her abilities.

Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania pioneered the study of applied positive psychology. According to his research, human beings are naturally programmed to seek out positivity and search for meaning in their work and lives. Positive psychology theorizes that we are capable of learning both helpful and harmful mindsets. We can learn helplessness, but we can also learn optimism. Learned optimism suggests that human beings can work to cultivate joy from the situations they experience. Seligman makes clear that learned optimism is not easy work, but effects from cultivating a “talent for joy,” consciously challenging negative thoughts and pessimism result in a stronger, more positive sense of self.

What Can You Try?

Become aware of your mindsets –what thoughts are going through your mind today that are affecting your mood or behaviors? Are you hanging on to beliefs that are contributing to your stress or inability to move forward? Are these mindsets serving you well or making life harder than it may need to be? When a mindset seems to be holding you back, know that you have a choice about the beliefs that you hold.

3 steps to developing new mindsets

1. **Challenge your mindset** – change the way you’re thinking by looking for evidence that contradicts your existing beliefs. Look for facts, stories, experiences that challenge your existing ideas while creating space for new ideas.
2. **Embrace your new mindset** – find small exercises you can begin to perform that help you to adopt and apply the new mindset so you can test it for yourself. For example, reframing the physical sensations of stress – racing heart, knotted stomach, sweaty palms – as simply your body’s way of letting you know something important to you is on the line.
3. **Share your new mindset** – the best way to learn something is to teach it. Share your new mindset with others and explore the impact it’s having in your own life to cement these beliefs going forward.

Growth mindset and positive psychology are related concepts that are forward-looking. We can and will become better even though we are not our best today. Both are focused on building strength in mind and in spirit; it is this strength that allows us to achieve greater levels of effectiveness and to tap into more powerful feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction. At their cores, both philosophies emphasize the ability of each one of us to change who we are today to become a better version of ourselves. It’s simply a matter of mind over matter.



Sources: “Change your mindset, change the game,” Ted Talk by Alia Crum, PhD, “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success,” by Carol S. Dweck, PhD and “Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life” by Martin Seligman, PhD.

MENTAL HEALTH CHECK-INS, JUST A CLICK AWAY

by Orlando J. Gonzalez, MEd, LMHC, CEAP

MENTAL HEALTH



How often do you check in on your own emotional, or mental, health? If you're like most people, the answer would be, "rarely!"

Most of us go about our days completing tasks and seeing to a variety of details without much observance over the way our day, or the people in it, impact our emotional and mental states. Even when those who care for us caution that we slow down, or "take it easy," we seem hesitant to heed their warnings. The key to helping ourselves in this regard lies in our capacity for self-awareness, the wisdom of valuing self-care, and the willingness to make self-nurturance an active priority.

The University of Miami FSAP aims to assist UM employees in this regard through the variety of services we offer. Our new website, rolled out this past October, has been re-designed and organized to give users a concise and clear understanding of FSAP services. One of its new features links users to an anonymous online assessment tool that evaluates the state of their emotional/mental health and guides those who wish to seek assistance. Enhancements have also been made to enable faculty and staff to easily request appointments to meet with an FSAP professional in person.

Commit to self-nurturance this holiday season! Visit us at <http://www.FSAP.Miami.edu> to explore the site and discover the variety of services available to UM employees and their dependents.

FEATURED SEMINAR

Chair Yoga for Wellness



This part of our FSAP Mind, Body, Spirit, seminar series invites participants to engage in a gentle and modified physical practice. Yoga has been shown to increase flexibility and balance, improve mood, reduce fatigue and sleep disturbances. This seminar will be facilitated by Angela Alvarado, CPT, CES, RYT-200.

January 2018! More details to follow.

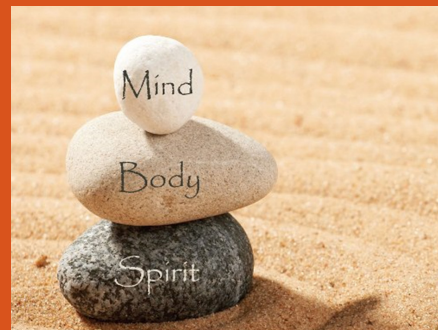
UPCOMING SEMINARS: Relax and Restore, Enhancing Your Emotional Intelligence, Dance Therapy for Stress Relief, Mindset Matters, Let's take a Stress Break

"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

William James

DID YOU KNOW?

The FSAP will begin a series of seminars focusing on the Mind, Body and Spirit connection in 2018. Attend to improve your well-being by nurturing these three aspects of your nature.



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.