

# Mind and Matter



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

## FACULTY AND STAFF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Caliope Bootle  
Secretary

Orlando Gonzalez  
MSEd, LMHC, CEAP  
Director

Pilar Tamburrino  
MS, LMHC, CEAP  
Assistant Director

Rosario Zavala  
MSW, LCSW, CEAP  
Consultant

### Contact us

 305-284-6604  [fsap.miami.edu](http://fsap.miami.edu)



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# Brighten your Summer with a Splash of Contentment

by Orlando Gonzalez, MEd., LMHC, CEAP

There are pitfalls to living in a culture that values the amassing of material possessions. One consequence may be losing sight of what is truly important, or losing our capacity to value or savor all that is available to us at any given moment. The truth is, great contentment and joy may be felt by those with very few material possessions. And, conversely, it is not uncommon for those who possess abundantly to feel generalized despair or discontent. Our level of contentment is not governed by the things we possess. Instead, it has everything to do with our capacity to appreciate, and derive pleasure from all that is being afforded.

This is not to say that we should not be ambitious people. Instead, as you make goals and strive to bring new and better things into your life, don't lose sight of what is already available. True Stress Management's December 2017 blog [How to Be Content: 15 Tips to Find Contentment](#), defined contentment as, "the state of being satisfied with what you have, where you are and who you are." It is a sense of gratitude during any given moment where we feel that nothing more is required to make that moment, or our lives, any more special.

## The True Stress Management blog offers the following tips for fostering contentment:

- 1) **Do What You Love** – It boosts your self-esteem and your self-worth, and makes you more motivated to try new things in life.
- 2) **Be Grateful** – Focus on (and reflect upon) the things you do have (friends, family, possessions, health) instead of the things you don't.
- 3) **Appreciate the Small Things in Life** – Focus on the little things that give you pleasure, like taking a walk or having a conversation with a friend. Most of these are free.
- 4) **Serve Others** – Adding a little ray of happiness to the lives of others will naturally make you happy. It will also make you appreciate what you have to offer.
- 5) **Accept Yourself** – Understanding and accepting who you are makes it easier for others to accept you. So, don't be too hard on yourself.



- 6) **Be Positive** – Always see the good in people and situations. Always assume positive intent. It opens your eyes to new opportunities and relationships.
- 7) **Be Your Best Friend** - You owe yourself the same amount of love you show others. Show yourself the same kindness you would show a good friend.
- 8) **Meditate** – It clears away stress and stimulates the part of the brain that makes you feel good.
- 9) **Have Goals** – It give you something to look forward to experiencing.
- 10) **Don't Compare Achievements** – Each circumstance is unique. Comparing yourself to others only breeds jealousy; a negative emotion that neither builds you or others.
- 11) **Forgive Yourself** – Doing so, for all the things you feel you've done wrong, alleviates the guilt and shame from your life. It give you space to focus on loving yourself and making your heart lighter.
- 12) **Choose to be Content** – Being content is a choice rooted in the decision to set realistic positive intentions.
- 13) **Live in the Present** – Base your thoughts and actions on what is present now instead of getting caught up in the events of the past, or what might happen in the future. The future is important too, but excessively worrying about it now serves no purpose.
- 14) **Accept Things You Cannot Change** – Wasting your energy on things that, “might have been” only frustrates you and makes it impossible to be content.
- 15) **Focus on the Essentials** – De-cluttering the unnecessary, give room for the important things to grow.

Take a summer challenge! Although many of the above tips are tall orders, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Choose to implement one simple task from one single tip each day (or each week) and notice yourself entering into the world with a heightened sense of gratitude and grace. We Floridians live in an abundantly beautiful corner of the world. When was the last time you paused to notice?

Reference:

True Stress Management (2017, December 16). How to Be Content: 15 Tips to Find Contentment [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://truestressmanagement.com/how-to-be-content/>

## THE ART OF REFRAMING

Instead of focusing on the problem a particular issue creates for you, reframing looks at the benefits or opportunities presented by that difficult issue.

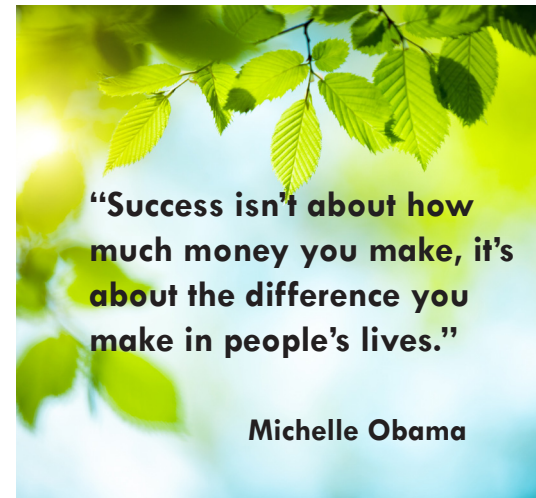
You can use reframes in two ways: to help you change your perceptions of any stressful situation, or to help you cope and recover from a perceived failure. Below are the steps to get started:

1. **Evaluate your language.** Write down any negative words that you use to describe the situation (failure, stupid, worst ever, and so forth).
2. **Choose new words.** For example, change “failure” to “stumble.” A “relapse” can be made into a “reminder” or even a “chance to start again.”
3. **Consider how you can use this experience as a teaching moment.** A teaching moment means taking a difficult situation and weaving an important lesson into it.
4. **Now get a pen or pencil and a stack of 3 by 5 index cards.** Write down a valuable lesson that you learned from a particular situation you are currently dealing with or from an earlier experience. Post this card in an easy to see location.

### Examples of statements you can utilize to encourage yourself to move forward:

- This is a challenge, not a problem.
- This is a learning experience. It is a great lesson.
- Someday I will laugh about it, and it will be a great story to tell.
- This could be much worse. I have it better than some others do.
- There are more things I like about myself than the one thing I focus on disliking.
- With crisis comes opportunity.

Source: “50 Ways to Soothe Yourself Without Food” by Susan Albers, Psy.D.



**“Success isn’t about how much money you make, it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.”**

**Michelle Obama**

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern in the United States. An estimated 40 million adults in the U.S. (18%) have an anxiety disorder. Meanwhile, approximately 8% of children and teenagers experience an anxiety disorder. Most people develop symptoms before age 21.



## UPCOMING SEMINARS

Managing Workplace Change  
Feel Good about Yourself...Now!  
Mindful Living  
Workplace Fitness - Fact or Fiction?  
Yoga Practices for the Office

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## FEATURED SEMINAR

### Beating the Odds: Addressing Problem Gambling

*This presentation is offered for those interested in learning about the hidden disease of gambling, which affects millions of individuals and their families who often struggle in silence. Our invited speaker, Ms. Noelle Selochan, LMFT, Clinical Director with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling will review types of gambling, prevalence rates, discuss symptoms associated with this disorder and will identify special populations that may be more at risk to gambling related issues. She will also address prevention and treatment services available to those affected.*

July 24-26

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