

HOLIDAY 2016



# Mind and Matter



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

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## IN THIS EDITION

### IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

*by Orlando Gonzalez, MSEd, LMCH, CEAP  
in Featured Article*

### TEN SIMPLE WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY

*in Mental Health Corner*

### DECK THE HALLS WITH STRESS-FREE HOLIDAYS

*in Featured Seminar*

## IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

by Orlando Gonzalez, MEd, LMHC, CEAP

The majority of us assign rich meaning to this time of year. Traditions, and the stories surrounding them, take on significant value as we commemorate those we have lost, celebrate with those we are fortunate to still treasure and revel in all for which we feel grateful.

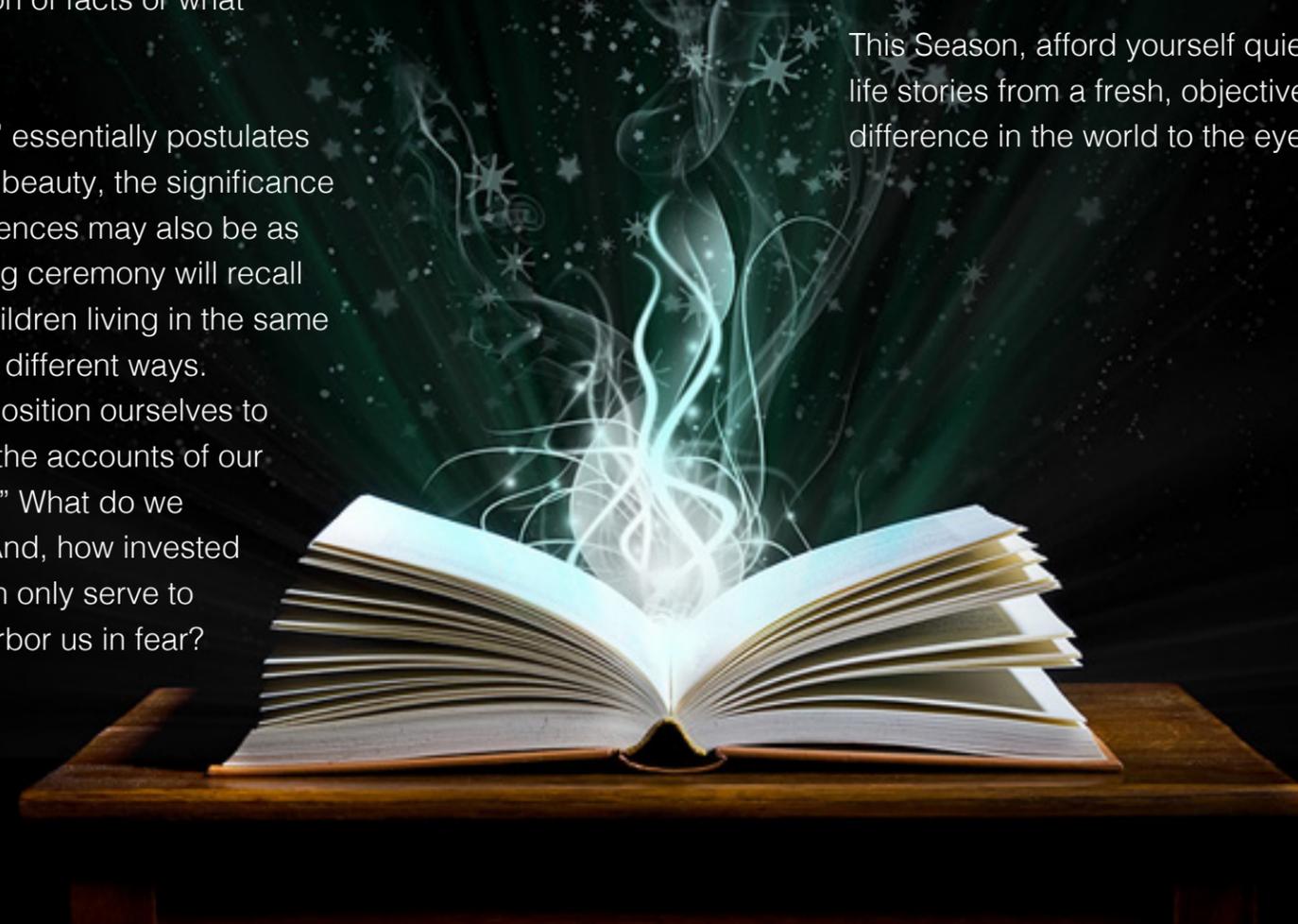
Stories inevitably accompany our experiences. Many are remembered with consistent detail while some seem to develop enhancements with each subsequent recall. Some are filled with great delight, or bitter-sweet fondness, and others filled with dread or the avoidance of their re-telling.

Stories have the capacity to affect us in ways unimagined. They possess the power to lift us to states of joy, or hopefulness, and can also serve to filter the way we view ourselves and/or the world in which we live. They have the potential to affect every aspect of our lives, but much of this hinges upon our interpretation of facts or what we choose to believe about each story.

The proverb, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," essentially postulates that the perception of beauty is subjective. As with beauty, the significance of the stories we tell ourselves about our life experiences may also be as subjective. After all, ten people attending a wedding ceremony will recall ten different accounts of the same event. Three children living in the same household will experience their upbringing in three different ways. With this in mind, it is wise to ask, "How might we position ourselves to gain the most benefit from the events we weather (the accounts of our past, present events and the hopes for our future)?" What do we believe about those with whom we live our lives? And, how invested are we in holding on to the stories we fashion which only serve to stagnate our relationships, limit opportunities or harbor us in fear?

As we journey through this holiday season and into whatever trials we perceive will accompany us in the coming New Year, make it a point to reflect upon, and challenge, the variety of stories held dear. Question how each might be useful. Become aware of the many stories we tell ourselves about the universe being (or not being) a mysterious and generative place to inhabit; the world being a complex but extraordinarily beautiful place to explore; our country being a challenging but creative place to impact; our communities being dynamic places to assert our individuality; our families being a motivating and hopefully loving place to learn and grow; our friendships offering support and caring; our partners gifting a life filled with intimacy and love; and ourselves availing the fruits of a life well lived. Imagine a life where stories do not hold us captive, but instead, used to teach life lessons and inspire us to remain fluid in our self-appraisals and flexible in the face of challenges; accepting blessings and the many opportunities risk taking will yield.

This Season, afford yourself quiet moments to pause, reflect upon, and re-tell your life stories from a fresh, objective and forgiving vantage point. It will make all the difference in the world to the eye of the beholder.



## TEN SIMPLE WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY

### **ONE** TAKE A TIME-OUT.

Practice yoga, listen to music, meditate, get a massage, or learn relaxation techniques.

### **TWO** LIMIT ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE.

They can aggravate anxiety and trigger panic attacks.

### **THREE** GET ENOUGH SLEEP.

When stressed, your body needs additional sleep and rest.

### **FOUR** EXERCISE DAILY.

Exercise helps you feel good and maintain your health.

### **FIVE** TAKE DEEP BREATHS.

Inhale and exhale slowly.

### **SIX** COUNT TO 10 SLOWLY.

Repeat, and count to 20 if necessary.

### **SEVEN** ACCEPT THAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL EVERYTHING.

Put your stress in perspective: Is it really as bad as you think?

### **EIGHT** MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

Make an effort to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

### **NINE** LEARN WHAT TRIGGERS YOUR ANXIETY.

Is it work, family, school, or something else you can identify? Write in a journal when you're feeling stressed or anxious, and look for a pattern.

### **TEN** TALK TO SOMEONE.

Tell friends and family you're feeling overwhelmed, and let them know how they can help you. Talk to a physician or therapist for professional help.

**"I DON'T HAVE TO CHASE EXTRAORDINARY MOMENTS TO FIND HAPPINESS—IT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME IF I'M PAYING ATTENTION AND PRACTICING GRATITUDE."**

- BRENE BROWN

## DID YOU KNOW?

The FSAP serves as an educational and informational resource for administrators, managers, supervisors and others in sorting through behavioral or performance issues. In addition, the FSAP can assist leadership with identification of intervention strategies, as well as, provide consultation on when and how to refer someone to the FSAP.

## FEATURED SEMINAR DECK THE HALLS WITH STRESS-FREE HOLIDAYS

The holidays, ideally a time of peace, joy, love and connection with friends and family will soon be here. If you are like many people, the very thought of all of the preparations you need to make is already making you feel stressed. This Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) seminar is offered to provide participants with an understanding of the types of stressors brought on by the holidays and offers suggestions/tips to relieve holiday stress. FSAP Health and Wellness seminars are offered as part of the University of Miami's Well 'Canes Program. This seminar will be facilitated by a UM FSAP consultant and held from noon to 1pm as follows:

**Coral Gables campus | Monday, December 12, McKnight Building, Room 201 AB**

**Miller School | Tuesday, December 13, Clinical Research Building, Room 692**

**Rosenstiel School | Thursday, December 15, Library, Media Room**

UPCOMING SEMINARS – Mindful Living and Staying Sane in an Insane World

## 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).