

# Mind and Matter

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

Holiday Season 2011

## Gifts of the Holiday Season

by Orlando J. Gonzalez, MEd, LMHC, CEAP

The true gifts of the Holiday Season

dwelt in our capacity to appreciate the blessings our

lives are afforded. Our ability to look beyond the superficial trappings of a culture of “must have’s,” “must be’s,” “must do’s,” and “must feel’s,” makes all the difference in the way we experience this potentially rewarding time of the year.



Much of holiday stress is, in fact, self-imposed. We mistakenly believe we “must have” what we perceive others have, must give costly gifts, must spend money we do not have available, must please everyone, must maintain worn-out traditions, and must not be saddened by, or grieve, those we miss.

This list of “musts” weakens our capacity to appreciate that which we do in fact have and for which we should be grateful. The gift of sight, for instance, affords the ability to read this newsletter. The gift of friendship affords the companionship and support of others. The gift of shelter affords safe harbor and privacy, as well as a place to rest and call home. The gift of loved ones lost, offers treasured memories and the reassurance we have been truly blessed by the grace they have

granted our lives. Their absence urges we remain mindful of what is truly important; an appreciation of their loving contributions, the value of caring for those who remain, and cherished celebration of the gift we call life.

When composed with a mindset grounded in wisdom, our list of blessings becomes extensive; surpassing in value, several hundred times over, any list of things our culture persuades we, “must have.”

A healthy approach for this Holiday Season will include thoughtful reflection of its true meaning; honoring it in ways that are inexpensive, creative, and fun.

Here are quick tips that may be of some help:

**Revise Expectations:** Keep it simple, plan breaks, and do not complicate matters.

**Limit Expenditures:** Give the gift of time spent with others, not money.

**Set Limits:** Do not overdo it, limit time spent with annoying people, let others help, and cut back when you feel overwhelmed.

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## ➤ Inspirational Quote

*“The happiest people don’t necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.”*

- (Unknown source)

## 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 [cbottle@miami.edu](mailto:cbottle@miami.edu).

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**Get Organized:** Make schedules or lists, and prioritize.

**Nurture Yourself:** Express your feelings, get enough sleep and exercise, eat well, minimize alcohol consumption, do something enjoyable each day, and seek help as soon as you think you may need it.

If you struggle, or know of someone who is struggling, to reign in the “musts,” remember the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) is here to assist UM faculty, staff, and their dependents, in developing positive approaches for making this, or any season, a time of gratitude, peace and hope.

Please do not hesitate to call our office at 305-284-6604 to schedule a free and confidential appointment to meet personally with one of our licensed consultants. Our staff wishes each of you a safe, must-free, and peace-filled Holiday Season.

## Recipes for Holiday Relaxation

**Total Time:** Varies

**Yields:** A reduction in stress

**Level:** Easy

1. Remember to breathe.
2. Listen to soft music.
3. Read a chapter from your favorite book.
4. Take a night out with some great friends.
5. Make yourself a cup of tea or hot chocolate.
6. Repeat positive affirmations.
7. Take a walk.
8. Take a bubble bath.
9. A change of scenery.
10. Practice relaxation techniques (breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization, etc.)
11. Watch a funny movie.
12. Light a scented candle (chamomile, jasmine, lavender, ylang ylang).
13. Take a time out (alone time is priceless).
14. Take a nap.
15. Play a game.

*Directions: The above are some ideas to help you unwind and relax during this Holiday season. Pick and choose what sounds good to you and run with it!*



## Lunchtime Seminars: Spring 2012

Becoming Consumer Savvy

Achieving Harmony and  
Balance in the New Year

Nurturing Healthy  
Relationships

Understanding Updates  
to your Property Taxes

Positive Parenting

The Benefits of Relaxation

Stress Management  
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“Schedule of Seminars” for  
more details.*

## FSAP Team

Caliope Bootle  
*Office Assistant*

Orlando Gonzalez  
*MSEd, LMHC, CEAP, Director*

Pilar Tamburrino  
*MS, LMHC, Consultant*

Rosario Zavala  
*MSW, LCSW, Consultant*

## Contact FSAP

305-284-6604

[www.miami.edu/fsap](http://www.miami.edu/fsap)

