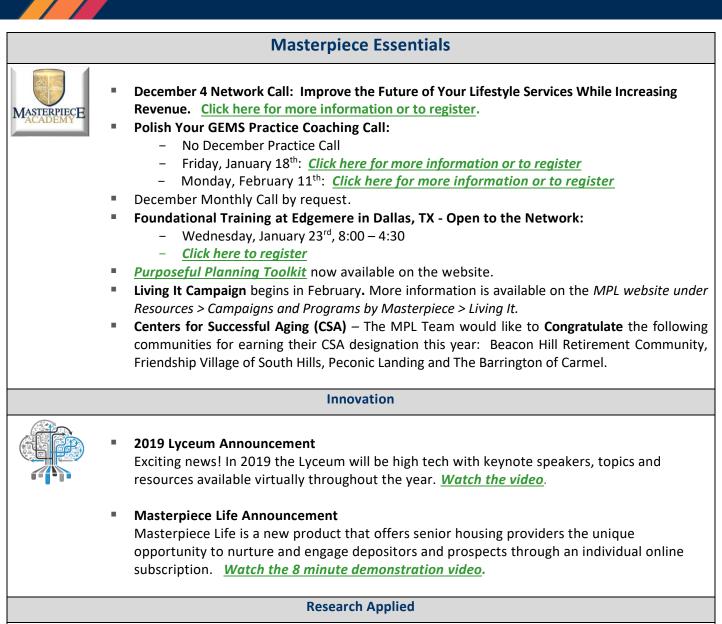
## Masterpiece Matters – December 2018



### Anxiety Can Affect Working Memory

Think of a time when you experienced a high-anxiety moment. Were you fully aware of what was going on around you at the time? Could you focus on all the details? Did you forget something about the situation or event?

In a 2016 study (referenced below), older adults without any serious health conditions were evaluated for memory tests on a self-reported basis. The data was analyzed to differentiate between anxious and depressive symptoms. The types of memory measured in this study included immediate memory, story recall, and list learning. Researchers concluded that primarily anxious residents experienced memory problems as opposed to those who were depressed.

One explanation for this influence is that anxiety increases the brain's attention to threat-related stimuli. For example, when an individual is called to eliminate irrelevant information and focus on a task at hand, intrusive thoughts fueled by threat are processed more efficiently and interrupt the process of encoding, storing, and recalling memories.

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Therefore, when working with older adults, it is important to take note of memory lapses possibly caused by anxiety and recognize this may not be dementia.

Ways to support residents in reducing worries and maintaining a sharp mind:

- Offer classes on mindfulness, mindful breathing, meditation or yoga.
- Provide a mini-series on caring for your mind as part of your total health. Invite local experts to share information and identify supportive resources.
- Identify chaplains and others within your community, or the greater community, who residents can connect with when feeling worried or anxious.
- Offer experiences where one can play or listen to calming music.

What Makes YOU Happy?

- A quiet mediation room or healing garden can serve as a calming environment within the community.
- Check out the website for the <u>Greater Good in Action</u> at UC Berkeley. Utilize practices that address anxiety, worry, fear, etc.
- Encourage more participation in physical activities to support the mind-body connection.
- Offer classes or opportunities for journaling, letting participants socialize with others while also journaling to clear the mind, express thoughts and look at things from a different perspective.
- Encourage participation in group and individual intellectual challenges do puzzles, play games, read more and participate in engaging activities.

Williams, M. W., Kueider, A. M., Dmitrieva, N. O., Manly, J. J., Pieper, C. F., Verney, S. P., & Gibbons, L. E. (2016). Anxiety symptoms bias memory assessment in older adults. International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 32(9), 983-990. doi:10.1002/gps.4557.

#### At A Glance



# Watch this short, inspiring intergenerational video created by Soul Practice, highlighting individuals of all ages asking the question, <u>"What makes you happy?"</u> Upon watching the 3-minute video you will discover that regardless of our own age, we are much more alike than we are different.

