



reCAPS

Counseling & Psychological Services
University of California, Santa Cruz

The “Three Things Challenge”: Starting a Gratitude Practice *By Julia Dunn*

Last summer, I took part in a counseling group for girls with social anxiety. In the midst of one of the most emotionally trying times of my life, I was struggling with situational depression and anxiety, so when my therapist, Julie, told the group to start writing down three good things about each day (and write *why*), I was skeptical. I didn’t know how much I believed her claim that a person’s levels of anxiety and depression would decrease after 6 weeks of writing down three good things about each day. Nonetheless, I began this practice on July 12, 2014.

It is January 8th, and since starting in July, I have not missed a single day of writing my “three things.” The intent of this practice is to cultivate gratitude for good things. When we’re depressed, it’s easy to lose sight of what is good and focus only on the bad. I started to notice measurable results by the end of August; I felt more capable of handling my troubles and became more attentive to the positive events in my life. Each day, I would choose what I would use as my three things as they occurred. Later, I would write them down with colorful pens

in my designated three things notebook.

I urge anyone to practice gratitude. You don’t have to have severe anxiety or depression to find benefits from implementing the three things practice into your life. Challenge yourself to write down three positive things every day, and see how many consecutive days in a row you can maintain this routine. Find a special journal or notebook to record your three things; I write mine in a rainbow notebook.

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All About CAPS

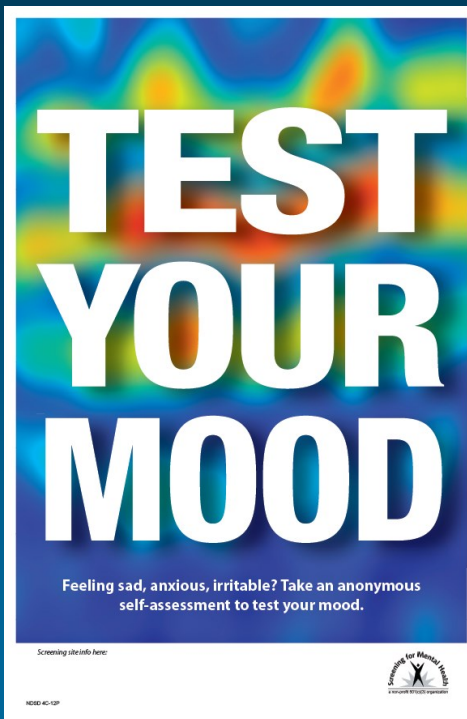
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers FREE, confidential mental health services to registered UCSC students all year ‘round:

- Brief individual, couples’ and group counseling
- Awesome workshops and trainings around campus
- Referrals to on- and off-campus resources
- Crisis services (in person Mon-Fri 8 am-5 pm; by phone 24/7 at 831-459-2628)

To make an appointment, call us at 831-459-2628 or stop by (Student Health Center, East Wing, 2nd floor) weekdays between 8 am and 5 pm. To learn more, visit our [website](#), check out the [CAPS blog](#), and like us on [Facebook](#)!

Upcoming Events

DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY: It's not unusual for college students to experience "the blues" or feel down occasionally. However, when your mood disrupts your ability to function on a day-to-day basis, it may indicate a serious problem that needs attention. CAPS can help determine the difference between just feeling down and depression at the Student Health Center on Wednesday, January 21st, from 11 am to 1 pm. Stop by for a free depression screening—and a free donut!



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Some days, you will struggle to find even one or two things you consider remotely good. On those challenging days, you might have to write something like “my arms worked all day” or “the toaster *didn’t* set itself on fire” (which was one of mine one day!). Other days, you might find even six or seven good things. (Include as many as you want! Why limit yourself to three?) Since arriving at UCSC last quarter as a first year, I have sometimes had more than ten noteworthy good things to write each day!

This exercise will increase your awareness and appreciation for the things that go well in your life. Gratitude will start dominat-

ing your thoughts and pushing out negativity. Make this practice a daily habit, and see how many good things you can find in your life!

OK, stop reading this article and go write your three things for today!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Julia Dunn is a first-year student at UC Santa Cruz double majoring in Literature (Creative Writing concentration) and either Linguistics or Marine Biology. She is a member of the CAPS Student Advisory Board.

Dear CAPS,

I have been feeling unmotivated to do my schoolwork and go to class. I don't want to fail out. Help!

—Stuck Student

Lack of motivation is common, and it can be caused by a number of factors. One is academic issues. When students are stressed by difficult classes or adjusting to the pace of college, they may lose steam. If this is true for you, seek help. Talk to your professors and TAs, seek tutoring or see if there is Modified Supplemental Instruction (MSI) for your class (contact Learning Support Services: <http://www2.ucsc.edu/lss/>).

You could also set up a study group or meet with your advisor to get advice about the classes you're taking. And, don't wait until the last minute

to ask for help—ask as soon as you start to feel behind or unmotivated.

Poor study skills can also drain motivation. Breaking work into smaller chunks (e.g., reading one chapter in each study session, starting a paper by just doing an outline) can help you get started, because it can make beginning a big assignment seem less daunting. If you're studying for hours with no breaks, it's easy to burn out. Regular short pauses to stretch, walk, and eat are important.

Another reason for low motivation may be bad self-care. Are you pulling all-nighters, living on coffee, and skipping meals? Are you letting exercise slide? Not getting enough sleep, nutrition, and exercise is often a major factor in low motivation. Think of yourself as being like a

car—if you don't change the oil and gas up, it's going to break down. Self-care also involves learning to cope with stress. Check out some self-help tips on CAPS' website at <http://caps.ucsc.edu/resources/self-help.html>. You may also benefit from talking to a doctor or counselor about stress reduction.

Sometimes low motivation is caused by depression. If you are feeling sad most days for more than a couple of weeks, have low energy, don't feel interested in things you used to like, and have changes in sleep and appetite, you may be depressed. Talk to a doctor or counselor to find out and get treatment. It's especially important to see a professional if you have serious thoughts about wanting to kill yourself. CAPS is one resource if you are feeling low.



STUDYING

The world's leading cause
of spontaneous napping.

CAPS' Peer Educator Program

The CAPS Peer Educator Program (PEP) is proud to announce our new members for the 2014-2015 academic year: Hilaria Barajas, Erika Garcilazo, Nathaleen Palomino, Marisa Patel, and Grace Shefcik. They join our two returning members, Alina Crom and Camara Chea. PEP students assist CAPS with outreach and education efforts, help fight mental health stigma on campus, and develop their own projects, which you'll be seeing throughout the year. Follow CAPS on [Facebook](#) and check out our [blog](#) (where we often feature stories about PEP members) to learn more about PEP! We accept applications for PEP every spring for the following academic year.



Contact CAPS:

Student Health Center
East Wing, 2nd Floor
Phone: 831-459-2628
(24/7 crisis help)
<http://caps.ucsc.edu>

Let's Talk Adding New Location for Winter Quarter

Let's Talk is a drop-in space where you can have a brief, confidential one-time chat with a CAPS counselor. It's free, and you don't need an appointment—just walk in!

CAPS launched Let's Talk in the fall of 2013 to provide another option for students looking for counseling services. CAPS recognized that sometimes students just want a short, one-time conversation with a counselor rather than more formal counseling services. That's what Let's Talk is all about.

This quarter, Let's Talk is adding a new location. In addition to Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at McHenry Library, Room 2285, and Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:30 pm at Baskin Engineering, Room 153B, you can now talk to a CAPS counselor at the Cantu Center on Mondays from 3 to 4:30 pm.

Read more about Let's Talk on the CAPS website at <http://caps.ucsc.edu/pdf/lets-talk-FAQs.pdf>.

