Mental Health Awareness Month, May 2021
Week 3 – Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

This third week of Mental Health Awareness month focuses on people who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Living through the COVID-19 pandemic, recent high profile gun violence killings, and racially-motivated assaults, has heightened the stress and trauma faced by many, adding to the numbers of people struggling with mental challenges. Racial and ethnic disparities in mental healthcare access, in utilization rates, and outcomes continue to persist in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It’s OK not to be OK. It is important to remember that mental illnesses are real, and recovery is possible.

TIPS FOR HEALING

We all face trauma, adversity, and other stresses throughout our lives. When people think of trauma, they often think of things like abuse, terrorism, or catastrophic events (big “T” trauma). Trauma can also be caused by events that may be less obvious but can still overwhelm your capacity to cope like frequent arguing at home or losing your job (little “t” trauma). Trauma of any kind can be hard on your mental health but working on becoming more resilient can help you feel more at ease.

Process your thoughts. During and after experiencing trauma, it’s common to go into survival mode and not have energy to wrap your head around what happened. It may feel safest to bury painful feelings and avoid confronting them, but acknowledging what happened and how it has impacted you is an important part of healing. When you feel ready, take time to think about how you’ve been affected (and be proud of yourself for pushing through).

Connect with people. The pain of trauma can lead some people to isolate themselves, but having a support system is a crucial part of wellbeing. Emotional support helps us to feel less alone or overwhelmed by what’s going on or has happened in our lives. Talking to someone who has gone through a similar experience or someone who cares about you can be validating - and help you feel more able to overcome the challenges you’re facing.

Don’t compare your experience to others: We often question our own thoughts or experiences, and you may convince yourself that what you experienced wasn’t a big deal because “others have it worse.” Everyone experiences trauma differently, and no one trauma is “worse” than another. It hurt you, then it hurt you -- and your feelings and experiences are valid.

Take care of your body. Stress and trauma impact your body and physical health just as much as your mind. Listening to your body and giving it what it needs will help you heal. This includes eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and exercising regularly. Moving your body is especially helpful in trauma healing! -- aim to do it every day, even if it’s only a few minutes of stretching.

Know it will take time. There is no set timeline for how you should heal. Remove the pressure of needing to bounce back quickly and focus on taking it one step at a time. Remember recovery isn’t linear, and it’s normal to have bad days and setbacks. It doesn’t mean you’re failing – it’s just part of the process.

Give yourself grace. Dealing with trauma and stress is no easy feat, but it’s still common to get frustrated with yourself and what can sometimes be a slow recovery process. Try to catch when you hold yourself to unreasonable standards -- instead of angrily asking yourself “why am I acting like this?”, think about how impressive it is that you keep going, despite what you have faced.

Don’t feel ashamed to ask for help. It’s easy to compare how you’re feeling to how you assume others who have been through similar experiences are feeling, and you may feel down on yourself because it seems like everyone else is doing just fine. What others experience and how they cope doesn’t matter in your journey – if you feel like you need (or want) help, it’s important to get that as soon as you can.
Steps You Can Take

- Trauma of any kind can be hard on your mental health but working on becoming more resilient can help you feel more at ease.

- Learn about how discrimination, biases, childhood experiences, and other social determinates of health contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in mental health.

- Examine how your cultural background impacts your biases and view of mental health conditions and treatments.

- Continue to talk about ethnic and racial disparities in mental health at your home, work, and in your community

- One of the most important things to remember about mental illness is this: people can and do recover. If you have a friend with mental illness, or if you have a mental illness yourself, remember that recovery is possible. Reach out to those around you with compassion, empathy, and understanding.

What a Difference a Friend Makes (pdf)
This brochure is designed to provide you with the tools to help support a friend you know is living with a mental illness and in the recovery process.
**P.A.U.S.E**

**Self De-Escalation**

**P**ay attention to my body, thoughts, and feelings.
What happens to my body when I get angry? e.g. clenched fist, elevated heart-rate? These are messages that I need to pause.
Am I breathing? What story am I telling myself?

**A**ssess what is activating me
What feelings are being activated? Do I not feel heard? Do I feel misunderstood? Am I upset about what is said or something else that happened to me recently?

**U**nderstand the roots of my feelings
What values of mine are being challenged? Am I seeking to resolve a disagreement or maintain power and control over something or someone else?

**S**et boundaries, Separate, Ensure Safety
If you are not able to show up in dignity and respect. Step away.
Set boundaries. Work with problem when you are less frustrated.
It is important everyone feels safe.

**E**mpathize with those involved
Everyone deserves respect. How could the other person be experiencing me? How will my actions impact others? What are others trying to express? How can we work for understanding?

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**LAPIS Peer Support Model**

**L**isten & Assess for Distress or Harm
Listen actively. Assess if there is any danger to themselves or to you. If needed contact a warm-line, local mental health informed responders, trusted community members, or mobile crisis units for support.

**A**ffirm Their Experience
Affirm that their feelings are valid without minimizing or refuting them. Reminder: You can affirm feelings without agreeing with narratives or stories.

**P**artner to Navigate Care & Seek Services
Partner with them to explore resources, services and options to the extent to which they can. Be mindful of your own privilege and identities and their impact on how you behave and are received.

**I**nitiate Self & Community Care Plans.
Until mental health help is secured, create plans for care and accountability. Who will check in, bring food, medications, and other care? Identify safe support networks. Be sure to create a care plan for yourself as you care for others.

**S**eek Out Help as Needed
Seek out local support such as trusted community members for insight on how you can help yourself or your friend. Resources, hotlines, and warm-lines can be found at: [www.beam.community/talktosomeone](http://www.beam.community/talktosomeone)
Helpful Resources

NAMI CHICAGO #JustCheckingIn on Community: Black Mental Health and Recovery 05-25-21 Virtual Event
Examining the challenges facing the Black community, how they impact Black mental health, and explore strategies for recovery and resilience. Open to attendees of all backgrounds.
Register: #JustCheckingIn on Community: Black Mental Health & Recovery

Consumers & Family Organizations in Illinois

Link: https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=115849

Illinois Warm Line - If you or one of you family members has mental health and/or substance use challenges and would like to receive support by phone, call the Illinois Warm Line at 866-359-7953. Wellness Support Specialists are professionals who have experienced mental health and/or substance use recovery in their own lives. They are trained in recovery support, mentoring, and advocacy and are ready to listen and support you. The Warm Line is not a crisis hotline but is a source of support as you recover or help a family member to recover. Hours of Operation: Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. except holidays.

DBSA - Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance
Mission: DBSA provides hope, help, support, and education to improve the lives of people who have mood disorders.

Furry Friends Recovery
Mission: Furry Friends Recovery provides educational and therapeutic support by connecting pet therapy teams to people who experience developmental, emotional and traumatic challenges, for comfort, healing and wellness.

Gift of Voice
Identity Statement: Our leadership consists of individuals with personal and professional experience in mental health and related fields.

GROW
The website of GROW, a consumer-run, recovery-oriented network of mutual help groups across Illinois.

Jail Brakers
About: Jail Brakers is a charitable organization - 501(C)3 - that provides a safe place for children and families to express their emotional reaction to the separation from a family member who has been incarcerated.

Next Steps, nfp
The project brings Illinois mental health providers, mental health practitioners, advocacy organizations and consumers together through the vision of mental health policy and practice which is developed by consumers for consumers.

The Alliance
Who We Serve: The Alliance's programs and services target families of youth ages 10 to 21 who are experiencing mental, emotional, or behavioral health problems

Vision for Change
Vision for change has experience providing training for law enforcement, hospital staff, libraries, faith-based organizations, universities, communities, government & media.
Vision for Change is the choice when it comes to educating yourself and your colleagues in mental health awareness.

Additional Websites/Resources

https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=87985

Facing Us: Your Online Home for Wellness
Join the Facing Us Clubhouse and experience interactive recovery on the web! Create an online journal or wellness plan, share recovery tips and quotes, design and print your own crisis plan, or share recovery stories, art work, tips and quotes. This site is provided by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA).
New Freedom Commission On Mental Health (pdf)
During his campaign, President George W. Bush declared support for people with mental and physical disabilities, pledging to "tear down" barriers to equality that face many of the 54 million Americans with disabilities. Immediately following his inauguration, President Bush announced the New Freedom Initiative on February 1, 2001. The President sent several proposals to Congress that would help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce, and promoting increased access into daily community life.

Mental Health Social Networking Sites (pdf)
Document that contains various social networking sites that have forums, chatrooms, blogs, resources, and online support groups. Note- This list is for informational purposes. Neither the IL Mental Health Collaborative nor the IL Division of Mental Health endorses or favors any of the sites listed. As with any Internet site, use personal discretion when self-disclosing personal information.

What a Difference a Friend Makes (pdf)
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Resources from Mental Health America
Mental Health America has the following pages dedicated to the BIPOC communities on its website and welcomes you to use and share this information in whatever way best suits your needs.

General
www.mhanational.org/bipoc-mental-health
www.mhanational.org/racial-trauma
www.mhanational.org/racism-and-mental-health

Black and African American Communities
www.mhanational.org/issues/black-african-american-communities-and-mental-health
www.mhanational.org/black-pioneers-mental-health
www.mhanational.org/bipolar-disorder-and-black-americans
www.mhanational.org/depression-black-americans

Latinx/Hispanic Communities
www.mhanational.org/issues/latinxhispanic-communities-and-mental-health
A complete list of Spanish language materials can be found at:
www.mhanational.org/latinxhispanic-communities-informacion-y-materiales-de-salud-mental-en-espanol

Asian American/Pacific Islander Communities
www.mhanational.org/issues/asian-americanpacific-islander-communities-and-mental-health

Native and Indigenous Communities
www.mhanational.org/issues/native-and-indigenous-communities-and-mental-health
Screening
MHA’s has 10+ screening tools available in English and provides screens for depression and anxiety in Spanish at www.mhascreening.org. Screening is a free, anonymous, and confidential way to determine if a person is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition and results can be used to start a conversation with friends, family members, or health care professionals.

TOOLS 2 THRIVE
MHA’s Tools 2 Thrive materials provide practical tools (tips and worksheets) that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency regardless of the situations they are dealing with.

Downloadable Tools2Thrive toolkit in English:
www.mhanational.org/2020toolkit

Downloadable Spanish language versions of Tools2Thrive
(Herramientas Para Prosperar) materials:
www.mhanational.org/get-involved/descarga-herramientas-para-prosperar-en-espanol

Additional Resources and Tools

Black and African American Communities
Black Emotional and Mental Health (BEAM) https://www.beam.community/:
BEAM is a training, movement building and grant making organization dedicated to the healing, wellness, and liberation of Black communities. BEAM envisions a world where there are no barriers to Black Healing.

The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation https://borislhensonfoundation.org/:
This organization is working to change the perception of mental illness in the African-American community by encouraging people to get the help they need; focuses on stigma/self-stigma reduction and building trust between Black people and the mental health field. See their directory of mental health providers and programs that serve the Black community.

The Loveland Foundation https://thelovelandfoundation.org/:
This foundation provides financial assistance to Black women & girls seeking therapy.

Therapy for Black Girls https://therapyforblackgirls.com/
This is an online space encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls; has referral tool https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/ to find a therapist in your area.

Therapy for Black Men https://therapyforblackmen.org/:
Primarily a therapist directory, https://therapyforblackmen.org/find-a-therapist/ for Black men seeking therapy; website includes resources and stories.

Dr. Ebony’s My Therapy Cards https://www.mytherapycards.com/?r_done=1
A self-exploration card deck created by a Black female psychologist for other women of color, created with the intention of helping other women of color grow and elevate in the areas of emotional and mental health.

Latinx Communities
Therapy for Latinx https://www.therapyforlatinx.com/
A national mental health resource for the Latinx community; provides resources for Latinx community to heal, thrive, and become advocates for their own mental health. Also includes a therapist directory.

Latinx Therapy https://latinxtherapy.com/
An organization working to break the stigma of mental health related to the Latinx community; learn self-help techniques, how to support self & others.

The Focus on You http://thefocusonyou.com/
Self-care, mental health, and an inspirational blog run by a Latina therapist.
Asian American/Pacific Islander Communities

Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) https://aapaonline.org/
An organization dedicated to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of Asian American communities through research, professional practice, education, and policy.

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum https://aahiinfo.org/aahi-resources/
Focused on improving the health of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. Sign up for a weekly digital “community care package” which includes inspirational stories, resources in a variety of languages, tools for adjusting and managing mental health, and a platform to share your story/connect with others.

Asian American Health Initiative https://aahiinfo.org/aahi-resources/
An organization responding to the health needs of Asian Americans. Resources are provided in 5 different languages on a variety of topics.

Native and Indigenous Communities

One Sky Center http://www.oneskycenter.org/
The American Indian/Alaska Native National Resource Center for Health, Education, and Research
This group is working to improve prevention and treatment of mental health and substance use problems and services among Native people. There are a number of downloadable resources, of particular note is their Guide to Suicide Prevention.

WeRNative https://www.wernative.org/
A comprehensive health resource for Native youth by Native youth, promoting holistic health and positive growth in local communities and the nation at large