

FEBRUARY 2021 | ISSUE NO. 1

THE MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

The Official Newsletter of MHPHC

ARTICLES TO HELP YOU THROUGH:

- Welcome - 1
- Black History Month - 2
- Eating Disorder Awareness Week - 3
- President's Message - 4
- Meet the Team - 5
- Resources - 6



IN RECOGNITION

At the time of writing, two distressing stories have surfaced in the last week about police brutality during mental health crises. We dedicate this first edition of our newsletter to the memory of Angelo Quinto - killed by cops during a mental health wellness check on December 23, 2020 in Antioch, California, and to Daniel Prude - who was killed on March 23, 2020 by Rochester Police; this month it was announced that these officers are officially not being charged for his murder.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

by Irene Jose

The Black community reports mental health issues at a demographically disproportionate rate. They are 20% more likely to suffer from Major Depressive Disorder or Generalized Anxiety Disorder despite constituting approximately 12% of the population. Moreover, Black emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 25 suffer higher rates of mental health concerns while displaying lower rates of mental health service utilization. This disparity in mental health problems is due to a plethora of issues: a dearth of culturally responsive and accessible mental health services, the underlying theme of racism and prejudice in the daily lives of Black individuals, and historically perpetuated trauma by the medical field onto black communities. Furthermore, mental health in Black communities is molded by systemic factors like racism, classism, economic insecurity, and its associated hardships like exposure to violence, crime, and unstable housing. The conjunction of these factors further compounds the issue of mental health in Black communities.

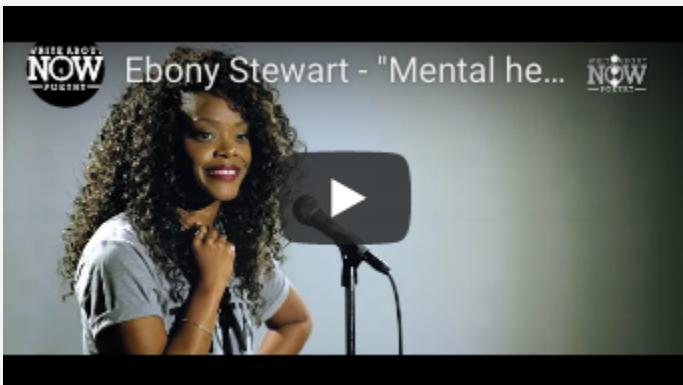
However, membership in religious organizations and the predominance of social connectedness in black communities embody protective factors - or coping mechanisms - for the community against psychological distress. Regardless, conversation surrounding mental health as a crucial aspect of overall health and well-being must be bolstered in black communities. Thereby, actively paving the path for the "destigmatization" of mental health and mental illness (Vance, 2019). Internalized stigma surrounding rejection and negative stereotypes also shape the willingness to seek help for mental health concerns in the black community. However, part of this internalized stigma can be traced to the dearth of culturally sensitive and responsive mental health services. Since mental health is quite vulnerable and individual in nature, the presence of a culturally responsive therapist or mental health provider is crucial in propelling members of the black community to seek help.

Dr. Thomas A. Vance, a practicing psychologist in Atlanta, Georgia who focuses on providing culturally tailored treatment plans in therapy, outlines three major tips that clients must consider while seeking culturally responsive therapists.

- Consider if the provider focuses on delivering culturally responsive care in their treatment plans - ask them directly.
- Focus on seeking a therapist or counselor that provides comprehensive care by addressing the interplay between your intersecting identities - race, sex, gender, class, etc - in conjunction with your culture.
- Some providers do not incorporate a culturally responsive approach in their services. Keep that in mind and ask if it is possible to incorporate this approach in your treatment plan.

By incorporating these tips and by acknowledging the importance of mental health's impact on day to day life, existing mental health stigma can be actively destigmatized while assuring the highest quality of life for ourselves and our communities.

Source: <https://www.columbiapsychiatry.org/news/addressing-mental-health-black-community>



MENTAL HEALTH BARZ - EBONY STEWART
[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)



THERAPY SESSION - ATLANTA TEAM
[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)



EATING DISORDER AWARENESS WEEK

February 22 - 28, 2021

Mental Health Public Health Connections (MHPHC) recognizes National Eating Disorder (ED) Awareness Week this February 22 - 28, 2021. Eating disorders affect about 9% of the worldwide population and are considered among the most deadly forms of mental illness (ANAD). This week - and all weeks -- it is important that we stand with our affected loved ones and community members to show our love and support.

OUR FRIEND HAS WRITTEN A BEAUTIFUL AND MOVING PIECE ILLUSTRATING HER OWN EXPERIENCE WITH ED...

"I don't remember if it happened at a treatment center table, conquering a food that caused me anxiety. I don't remember if it happened when I returned home and bought a new, fun wardrobe to celebrate my new, larger body. I don't remember if it happened when I told my therapist I was starting to see myself as more than a body, as more valuable than the number on the scale.

For more than a decade, I didn't see myself as worthy. I judged my value by how small I could be. I would weigh myself obsessively, never satisfied -- even at my lowest weight. Food was not a source of pleasure or nourishment -- it was a source of unrelenting anxiety. I was constantly preoccupied with thoughts about what I was going to eat, what eating disorder behaviors I was going to engage in, what I looked like to the outside world, and how much I weighed. The most important thing to me was not my career, my marriage, my friendships, my passions, my education -- the most important thing was getting thinner. And in shrinking myself, I also shrunk my life.

Life became suffocating and unbearably turbulent. I had trouble consistently taking medicine to manage my bipolar disorder because I feared weight gain. The disorders exacerbated each other. My moods crashed over me in violent waves, testing my relationships and my own will to survive. Several times, I ended up in the hospital. After my third hospitalization in less than a year, my doctor told me treatment was non-negotiable.

I entered eating disorder treatment defiant and angry. I didn't want to admit that I was sick. I didn't want to take time off of work to deal with it. And I definitely didn't want to address the underlying issues that contributed to my eating disorder. But slowly, over time and with a lot of support and hard work, I got better. My life opened up. And the things that are truly important to me started to come into focus.

I don't remember when I started believing full recovery is possible. But now, I look at myself in the mirror and am amazed. At how much my relationships with food and my body have improved. At the amount of brain space I reclaimed as I walked deeper and deeper into recovery. At how resilient I am. Recovering from an eating disorder has been the most challenging thing I've ever done, but it's allowed me to rebuild myself into the person I want to be."

Bryan Barks

If you or a loved one is suffering from an eating disorder and in need of support, call 1-800-931-2237 or text CONNECT to 741741.

A Message from the President

by Julia Loewenthal



Hello BUSPH mental health community!

I am thrilled to write to you in our first MPHC newsletter. As I write, there is a snowstorm outside and my dog snoring quietly behind me. Calm moments like these can momentarily let the constant bombardment of tension leave the forefront of my mind. It has been a year of the pandemic, and moments of mental escapism have, for me, found a new importance. I have to remind myself that it is ok to be where you are. This sentiment can feel impossible. As public health professionals, I imagine we all feel a sense of urgency. There is so much broken and so many are hurting – being in the present can feel like an act of negligence.

It is in moments like this I try and hold Audre Lorde's words: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Unfortunately, in the US, self-care feels selfish and frivolous, rather than necessary. How can we help others while running on empty?

As this is my first president's letter, I want to share a little more about myself beyond my bio. I believe mental health is political, and that systematic approaches to mental health care are too often devalued for clinical interventions. I want to acknowledge the harm the mental health field has done, and vow to do my best to make this organization a space that upholds a restorative process. I am a person who holds both white privilege and wealth privilege, and also a person who identifies as outside the gender binary, is Jewish, and has chronic illnesses both visible and invisible; I want to acknowledge the complex spectrum of privilege and marginalization we all fall on. The primary thing I want you to know about me in this opening letter is that I am determined to do my best, and keep learning. I hope you will engage with our organization, and with me personally! Feel free to connect with me by email (jdloewe@bu.edu), on [LinkedIn](#), or on social media (@jd_loewe).

Now, I implore you to take a moment with me and engage in the radical act of self-care. Take a beat, take a breath; allow yourself to be in the present in between moments of panic and planning. I so look forward to this next semester together!

Warmly,
Julia Loewenthal (she/her/hers)

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." - Audre Lorde

MEET THE REST OF THE TEAM



Anna Petterson - Vice President



Michael Hanks - Treasurer



Claire Hogan - Secretary



Irene Jose -
Outreach Coordinator



Ayushi Shrivastava -
Communication Chair



Carol Dolan -
Advisor

Resources 4 U

Boston-based resources:

Therapists Who Are POC -

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/10VdlFg9TNkgljxAxVcCgCfCaOmRnJGUUV52rEH3fpc/edit#gid=1927960264>

Finding a Therapist - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>

BU resources:

Behavioral Medicine at BU - <https://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/>

Wellness and Prevention - <https://www.bu.edu/shs/wellness/>

Center for Anxiety & Related Resources - <https://www.bu.edu/card/>

Wellness Tips (POC resources)

Black Women in Wellness - <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/black-women-in-wellness>

Mental Health Resources and Tips for POC - <https://www.self.com/story/black-mental-health-resources>

Wellness Space - <https://www.yougoodsisyoga.com/about-us>

General Tips

Distress Tolerance Skills - <https://www.sunrisertc.com/distress-tolerance-skills/>

Wellness Amidst Coronavirus -

<https://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2020/07/Wellness-Amidst-Coronavirus.pdf>

Journal for Anxiety - <https://silviabastos.medium.com/7-ways-you-can-use-your-journal-to-instantly-soothe-anxiety-3e72b7d20958>

How to Get Sleep in Anxious Times (Podcast) -

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-get-sleep-in-anxious-times-dr-donn-posner/id1087147821?i=1000486233873>