

Mental Health Awareness Month | *Article*

BIPOC Mental Health Awareness

Mental health is tied to individual experience, so it's important to highlight the different needs of those who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color). By taking time to understand the unique identities and experiences of underrepresented communities, we can better comprehend and address the varying range of mental health needs and work towards an inclusive and safe environment.

Racial trauma is the traumatization that results from experiencing racism in any of its many forms. Trauma resulting from experiencing racism does not always stem from one major isolated event. Racial trauma can result from multiple reoccurring subtle acts of discrimination and microaggressions. These prolonged experiences often lead to mental health conditions such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Here are some examples of discrimination and micro-aggressions that may cause trauma for people of color:

- Being avoided, ignored, excluded or feared by others
- Being stereotyped, criticized or ridiculed by others
- Profiling by authorities, peers or businesses
- Unfair policies, practices and inequitable opportunities within established institutions
- Educational or professional curriculum that ignores or minimizes BIPOC history and contributions to a shared society
- Lack of representation
- Devaluation or minimization of thoughts, feelings and experiences
- Exposure to outdated and offensive views and terminology

Taking steps to proactively care for your mind, body and spiritual self can serve as a protective measure against traumatic stressors. There is no "right" way to react to racism and the trauma caused by it. It is important for BIPOC to acknowledge and accept their feelings, discuss experiences with trusted individuals, seek support to help facilitate positive coping mechanisms and practice self-care and empowerment by using their voice however they feel comfortable.



For more information on BIPOC mental health:

1. Call the number on your insurance card to be referred to a trained mental health professional.
2. Reach out to your local community and faith-based organizations.
3. Talk with your doctor.
4. Contact your WellConnect Student Assistance Program.
5. Visit Mental Health America and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for more information.