

BLACK MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Understanding The Rich Diversity of Black/AA Healing Traditions of Care

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OBJECTIVES

1. To increase awareness and understanding of the history of Black mental health and the legacy of trauma and oppression in the Black community.
2. To explore the ways in which Black communities have developed their own healing traditions and practices, including traditional and alternative therapies, spirituality, and community support.
3. To discuss the ongoing challenges faced by Black Americans in accessing mental health care and the barriers to healing, including stigma, lack of access to resources, and ongoing discrimination.
4. To provide information on resources and support available for Black Americans seeking mental health care, including organizations, programs, and online communities.
5. To encourage participants to explore their own experiences with mental health and to encourage dialogue and reflection on the role of community and tradition in promoting healing and resilience.

"Black people have faced some of the greatest challenges in history, but through it all, we have remained strong, resilient, and determined to succeed."

- Barack Obama

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How has your community supported you in times of stress or difficulty?
2. What role do cultural traditions and practices play in your own healing process?
3. What steps have you taken to seek support and healing for yourself or for those close to you?
4. How can we work together to promote healing and resilience in the Black community?
5. What role can community and cultural traditions play in promoting healing and resilience for future generations?

MENTAL HEALTH IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN BLACK COMMUNITY

1. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), approximately one in five African Americans will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.
2. African Americans are less likely to receive a timely diagnosis and treatment for mental health conditions compared to other racial groups. This is due to a variety of factors, including lack of access to care, stigma, and a lack of culturally competent healthcare.
3. African Americans are more likely to experience trauma and adverse life events, such as violence and discrimination, which can contribute to mental health conditions.

MENTAL HEALTH IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN BLACK COMMUNITY

3. Disproportionate impact of poverty: African Americans are more likely to live in poverty, which is a significant risk factor for poor mental health.
 4. Disparities in access to care: African Americans are less likely to have health insurance and face other barriers to accessing mental health care, including lack of transportation, and a shortage of mental health providers in their communities.
- It is important to note that these statistics represent patterns and trends, and not all individuals within the African American community will experience these issues.
 - Nevertheless, addressing these disparities in mental health is crucial for promoting the well-being of this community.

BLACK AMERICANS ARE LESS LIKELY TO SEEK MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN TRADITIONAL SETTINGS

- Black people are less likely to seek care for their mental health in traditional MH settings.
- Statistics tell us that about 25% of African Americans seek mental health treatment, compared to 40% of white Americans.
- Unequal access to health care is one major contributor to this disparity. Nearly 10% of Black people in the U.S. do not have health insurance, compared to 5.2% of non-Hispanic white people.
- When members of the Black community do seek mental health care, they are more likely to receive it from an emergency department than from a mental health specialist.

MISTRUST OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE

- Black Americans develop mental health conditions at a rate equal to anyone else. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has declared racism a serious threat to public health that has placed communities of color at greater risk for poor health outcomes.
- Racism in healthcare: Racism and discrimination in healthcare settings continue to be significant problems for Black Americans, leading to mistrust and reluctance to seek treatment for mental health issues.
- Historical mistreatment: Black Americans have a long history of being subjected to medical experimentation and abuse, including in the field of mental health. This history has left a lasting legacy of distrust and skepticism towards healthcare institutions.
- When considering the mental health of Black Americans, it is important to view their experience through a historical and cultural lens. The Black community has shown resilience in the face of adversity for centuries.

BIAS IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

- Black people can also face prejudice from health care providers. Communication between providers and patients can differ for African American patients compared with white patients.
- In one study, physicians working with Black patients were 33% less likely to engage in patient-centered communications than they were with white patients.
- Such discriminatory practices have been connected to patients' increased psychological distress.

AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALING PRACTICES

- African American healing practices and traditions have a long and rich history that have been passed down from generation to generation.
- These practices and traditions are a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of the Black/AA community and continue to play an important role in promoting mental health and well-being.
- However, it's important to note that not all individuals within the African American community practice these traditions, and some may choose to incorporate elements from other cultures and beliefs.

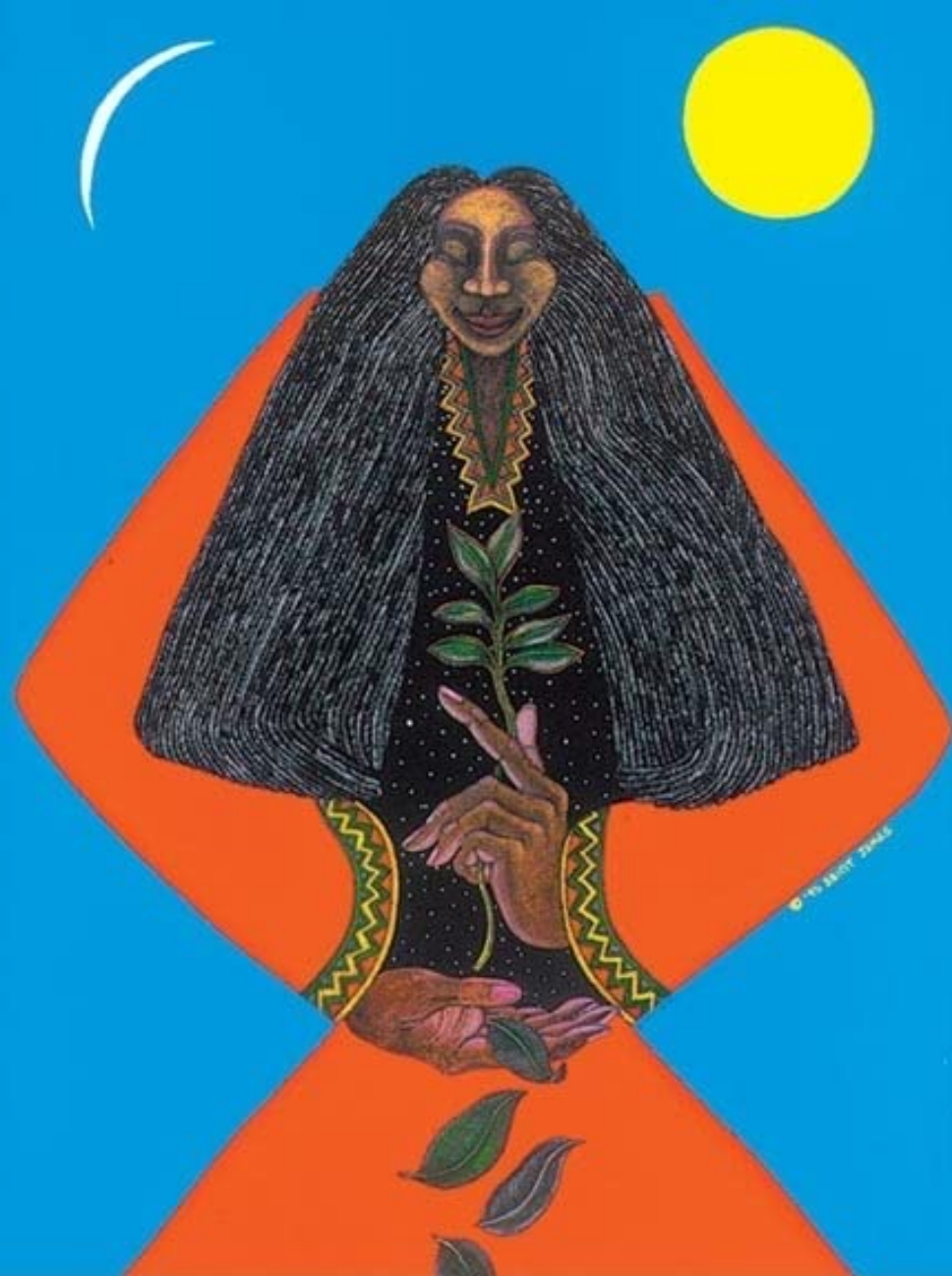
SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

- Spirituality and religion have been a source of comfort and healing for many African Americans.
- Practices such as prayer, meditation, and participation in religious communities have been used to help individuals cope with stress, depression, and other mental health challenges.
- Faith-based communities: For many Black individuals, faith-based communities provide a source of support, comfort, and healing. These communities can offer a sense of community, provide opportunities for spiritual growth, and help individuals navigate the challenges of life.



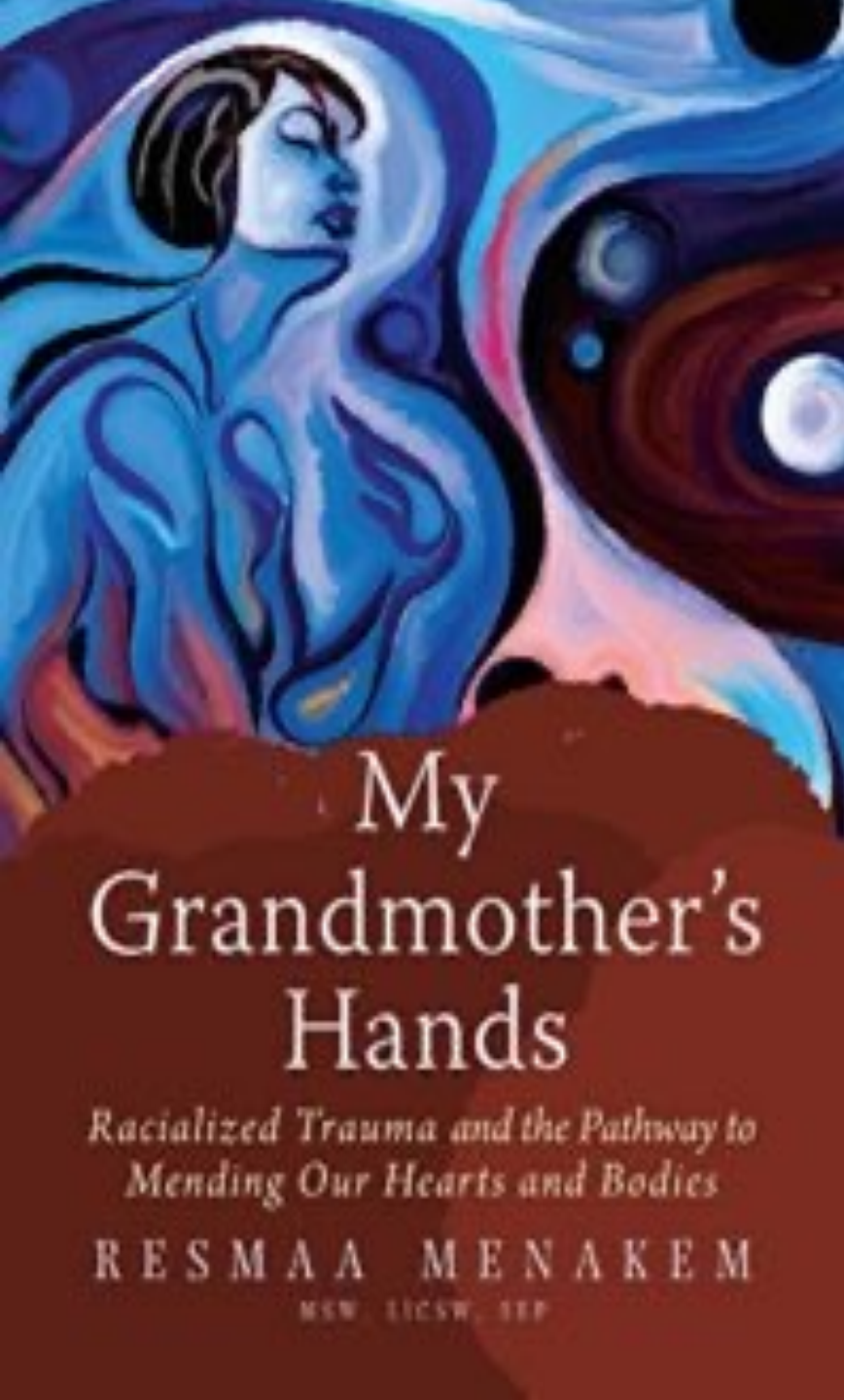
FOLK HEALING

- Folk healing refers to the use of traditional, culturally-based healing practices that are passed down within communities. In the Black community, folk healing has a rich history and has played a crucial role in promoting mental health and well-being.
- African American folk healing incorporates the use of herbs, spiritual rituals, and massage to treat physical, emotional, and spiritual ailments.
- Body work and energy healing practices such as massage and acupuncture, are commonly used in the Black community as a means of promoting physical and mental well-being. These practices can help to relieve stress, reduce pain, and improve overall health and well-being.



African American Folk Healing

Stephanie Y. Mitchem



RESMAA MENAKEEM - THE 5 ANCHORS

- Resmaa Menakeem is a therapist, author, and educator who has developed a number of practices and exercises aimed at promoting healing and resilience in the face of racial trauma.
- In Menakeem's book *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, he offers a somatic (body-based) method to heal from racial trauma.
- One such exercise is the 5 Anchors exercise, which is designed to help individuals develop a greater awareness of their body's responses to racial stress and trauma and to develop greater resilience and self-awareness.

THE 5 ANCHORS EXERCISE INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- Find a quiet, comfortable space.
- Get into a relaxed position: You can sit in a chair, lie down, or stand. It's important to be relaxed, so take a few deep breaths to calm yourself.
- Focus on your breath: Start by focusing on your breath. Breathe deeply and slowly, counting each inhale and exhale.
- Identify physical sensations: As you continue to focus on your breath, pay attention to the physical sensations in your body. You may notice tension, tightness, or discomfort in certain areas.
- Anchor yourself in these sensations: Once you've identified physical sensations in your body, "anchor" yourself in these sensations by focusing your attention on them. Try to stay with these sensations, observing them and accepting them, without judgment.

MUSIC & DANCE

- Dancing can have massive mental health benefits such as increasing vitality and fitness and improving psychological functions and social skills
- Music and dance have been used as therapeutic tools in African American communities to relieve stress, express emotions, and promote overall well-being.
- For example, gospel music has been used to provide solace and comfort during times of distress, and social dances such as juke joint dancing, have been used to promote community and build social connections.
- This nurtured form of expression are for those moments when Black people cannot put their emotions into words and need to release through movement.



“Every time we're in movement together as a community, superseding our oppression for that one moment, we're in a collective transcendence of so much of what we have to live through in these Black bodies.”

- SONYA RENEE TAYLOR,
activist and author of *The Body Is Not An Apology*

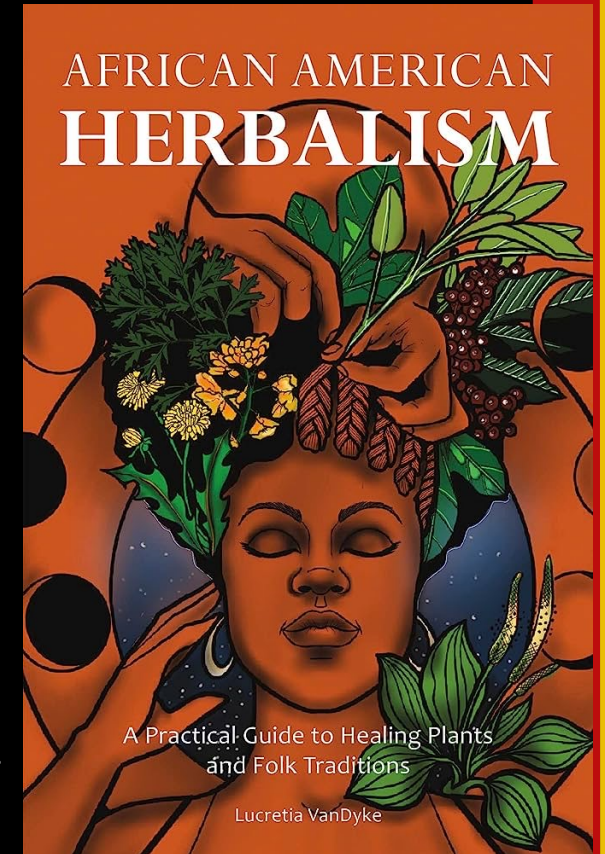
STORYTELLING

- Storytelling has been an important tradition in African American communities, serving as a way to preserve cultural heritage and pass down knowledge from one generation to the next.
- Storytelling can also be therapeutic, providing individuals with a way to process their experiences and emotions.
- By sharing stories, Black individuals can connect with one another, build a sense of community, and work through challenges and traumatic experiences.



HERBALISM

- Herbalism has long been a part of the healing and mental health practices of the black community, both in Africa and in the diaspora.
- In many African cultures, herbal remedies and plant-based treatments were used for a wide range of physical and mental health concerns, and this knowledge was passed down from generation to generation.
- In the face of systemic oppression and discrimination, herbalism has also been used as a means of self-empowerment and healing for black communities.
- By incorporating herbal remedies into their wellness routines, Black individuals can reclaim their power and work towards healing and well-being.



HERBALISM

Herbal remedies can be used to treat a wide range of physical and mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, stress, and insomnia. Some common herbs used in Black herbalism include:

- Valerian root: This herb is known for its calming and sedative effects and is often used to treat anxiety and insomnia.
- Passionflower: This herb is known for its calming effects and is often used to treat anxiety and depression.
- Ashwagandha: This herb is used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine to reduce stress and anxiety and improve mental and physical performance.
- Skullcap: This herb is known for its calming and relaxing effects and is often used to treat anxiety and stress.
- Turmeric: This herb has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and is often used to treat a variety of physical and mental health concerns, including depression and anxiety.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Community support and healing are essential components of mental health and well-being in the Black community. In the face of systemic oppression, discrimination, and trauma, Black communities have often relied on strong social networks and a deep sense of solidarity to support one another and heal.
- Community gatherings and events: Regular community gatherings and events provide an opportunity for Black individuals to come together, connect with one another, and engage in activities that promote healing and well-being.
- Support groups: Support groups can be a valuable resource for Black individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. These groups provide a safe and supportive space where individuals can share their experiences and receive support from others who understand what they are going through.
- Cultural activities and traditions: Engaging in cultural activities and traditions can be a powerful way to promote healing and well-being in the Black community. By participating in cultural events, Black individuals can connect with their heritage, build a sense of community, and engage in activities that promote healing and growth.



“YOU GOOD?": BLACK MENS HEALING CIRCLE – WALK GOOD LA

- Nonprofit WalkGood LA hosted a Black men's healing circle called “You Good?” with more than 100 Black men in attendance for yoga, journaling and meditation.
- Etienne Maurice founded WalkGood LA with his sister and cousin in 2020 in response to the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.
- The organization provides free and donation-based wellness events with a focus on communities of color.
- Maurice highlights wellness and self-care as a new form of protest.



"In the face of oppression and discrimination, the Black community has always found ways to resist, rebuild, and persevere. We are a people of strength, resilience, and determination."

- Unknown



THANK YOU!

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RESOURCES

1. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Black Communities: <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Diverse-Communities/African-Americans>
2. Mental Health America: Black Mental Health: <https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/black-mental-health>
3. Black Mental Health Alliance: <https://www.blackmentalhealthalliance.org/>
4. National Association of Black Psychologists (NABP): <https://nabpweb.org/>
5. The National Council for Behavioral Health: <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/topics/racial-equity/>
6. The Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM): <https://beamexperience.org/>
7. The Movement for Black Lives: Mental Health & Healing: <https://m4bl.org/issues/mental-health-healing/>
8. Black Women's Health Imperative: Mental Health: <https://bwhi.org/what-we-do/mental-health/>
9. Therapy for Black Girls: <https://www.therapyforblackgirls.com/>

These resources provide information on mental health issues and services specific to the Black community, as well as resources for accessing mental health support and treatment. If you or someone you know is in need of immediate help, please reach out to a mental health professional or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).