



Understanding Stress, Resilience & Wellbeing of African-Americans in the Workplace

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About Me



Pronouns she/her
Los Angeles
(Tongva land)

UC Santa
Barbara
USC

"A rested you is a
better you."

Therapist and
Mental Health
Consultant

Founder &
President of
SoulCare LA

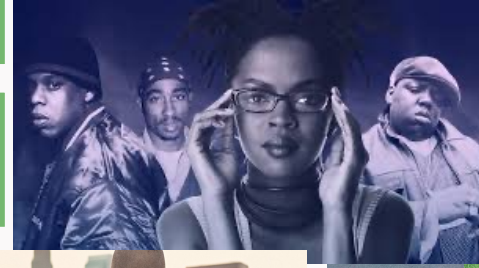
Proud Daughter,
Sister, Auntie &
Dog Mom and
Dog Foster

Travel, Art &
Music, Reading,
Outdoors

3 values –
Autonomy,
Compassion and
Kindness



popl



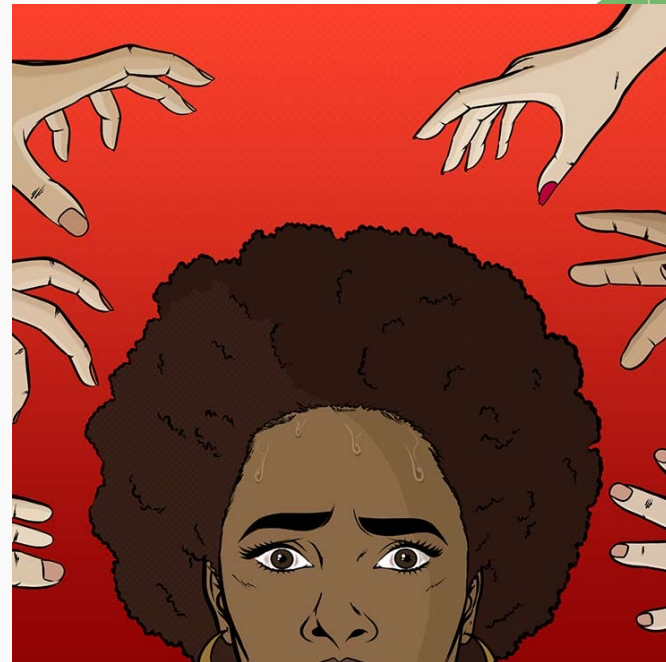
What's on the agenda today?

1. Increase Awareness: explore the stressors faced by Black/African-American employees in the workplace
2. Promote Wellbeing: acquire actionable insights to foster a culture of well-being for Black/African-American employees in the workplace.
3. Build Resilience: highlight the resilience of African-Americans, explore practical strategies to foster inclusive and supportive workplaces for all.



Workplace stress and burnout for African-Americans

- Black/African-American employees often encounter distinct stressors in the workplace that stem from systemic inequalities, cultural biases, and historical disparities.
- Higher Stress Levels: African-American employees report higher levels of workplace stress compared to their white counterparts. Source: "APA Stress in America Survey, 2019"
- Microaggressions Impact: Research indicates that 64% of Black professionals experience microaggressions at work, contributing to increased feelings of stress and isolation. Source: Center for Talent Innovation, 2020
- Unequal Opportunities: Black employees are less likely to receive promotions compared to their white colleagues, exacerbating feelings of disillusionment and stagnation. Source: Harvard Business Review, 2021



Stressors + Workplace Barriers that Impact AA Employees

1. News and world events related to racial controversy, health threats, and other stressors can bring overwhelm and exhaustion.
2. Microaggressions, either in the form of exclusion or invalidation, can also cause mental fatigue at work. Non-Black co-workers may not share the same exhaustion, leaving Black employees to “push through” in an environment that doesn’t recognize their unique stressors.
3. Assimilating to the work environment
4. Many AA/Black employees make daily decisions about how much of their authentic selves to bring to work. Hairstyles, speech patterns, and other details that differ from white cultural norms bring negative repercussions in some workplaces. Constant self-policing to assimilate can leave employees drained.



Microaggressions

- **Stereotypical Assumptions:**

- Example: Assuming that a Black/African-American colleague is in a lower-ranking position or assuming their role based on racial stereotypes, such as assuming they are in a service or custodial role rather than a professional one.


- **Invalidating Experiences:**

- Example: Dismissing or downplaying the experiences and perspectives of Black/African-American colleagues, such as responding with disbelief or skepticism when they share experiences of discrimination or inequality in the workplace.

- **Racialized Comments or Jokes:**

- Example: Making racially insensitive comments or jokes directed at Black/African-American colleagues, such as making remarks about their appearance, cultural practices, or language in a derogatory or mocking manner.





Judgements or characteristics attributed to specific groups of people – races, genders, age groups, etc. – that may or may not be true for any one specific individual within that group.

STEREOTYPES

MICROAGGRESSIONS

IMPLICIT BIAS

Subconscious attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions, and behavior when interacting with various identities.

Subtle verbal or nonverbal insults, indignities, or denigrating messages directed toward an individual due to their marginalized identity. Often committed by well-intentioned people who are unaware of the hidden messages conveyed or the impact of their statements.



Why do African American workers experience higher burnout?

- Exposed to incidents of racism—via the news, social media, and their personal experiences.
- The emotional toll it takes to process these events daily and recognize their impact on your personal life—while being expected to meet deadlines at work—can be incredibly overwhelming.
- Feelings of isolation and invalidated at work, rather than a sense of belonging and community, which can lead to burnout.
- Heightened pressure to perform - feel pressure to perform at a higher level. There may be an expectation to prove one's self and exceed expectations, along with feelings of responsibility of representing the community as a whole, and a fear of failure altogether.



SIGNS OF BURNOUT

1% 



Headaches + muscle tension



Feeling helpless and drained



Neglecting self care



Endless anxiety + feeling overwhelmed



Negativity, irritability and unexplained tension



Overly tired, inconsistent sleeping patterns, Insomnia



isolation, blunted/distant emotions



Feeling numb or apathetic about life

Landyschemist.com



Resiliency factors of African-Americans

- Black/African-American individuals often draw upon a rich history of resilience, community support, and cultural pride, which serve as powerful buffers against workplace stress.
- Through a strong sense of identity and collective empowerment, AA navigate challenges with resilience and determination in the face of adversity.



Resiliency factors of African Americans

- **Community Support and Social Networks:** Strong social support networks within the African American community, including family, friends, and cultural institutions, serve as crucial buffers against stress and burnout.
- **Cultural Identity and Pride:** A strong sense of cultural identity and pride in one's heritage can provide resilience against workplace stressors by fostering a positive self-concept and affirming cultural values.
- **Spirituality and Faith:** Many African Americans draw strength from spiritual beliefs and practices, which provide comfort, guidance, and a sense of purpose during challenging times.
- **Resilient Cultural Traditions:** Drawing upon resilient cultural traditions, such as storytelling, music, and art, can serve as coping mechanisms and sources of inspiration, promoting psychological well-being.
- **Historical Resilience and Collective Memory:** Recognition of the resilience and strength demonstrated by African Americans throughout history, despite adversity and oppression, fosters a sense of collective resilience and empowerment.



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**BY ACTING COMPASSIONATELY, BY
HELPING TO RESTORE JUSTICE
AND TO ENCOURAGE PEACE, WE
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE
ALL PART OF ONE ANOTHER.**

– RAM DASS



Creating Supportive and Inclusive Spaces for AA Staff

- **Educate Yourself:** Take the initiative to educate yourself about the experiences and challenges faced by Black coworkers in the workplace. Engage in self-reflection, read relevant literature, and seek out resources to deepen your understanding of systemic racism and inequality.
- **Listen Actively:** Practice active listening when interacting with Black coworkers. Create opportunities for open and honest conversations where their perspectives and experiences are valued and heard without judgment. Prioritize empathy and validation in your interactions.
- **Challenge Bias and Microaggressions:** Speak up against bias and microaggressions when you witness them in the workplace. Use your privilege to advocate for equity and inclusion, and actively work to create a culture where discriminatory behaviors are not tolerated.



Creating Supportive and Inclusive Spaces for AA Staff (2)

- **Amplify Black Voices:** Actively amplify the voices and contributions of Black coworkers in meetings, discussions, and decision-making processes. Recognize and celebrate their achievements, expertise, and unique perspectives, and ensure that they have equal opportunities to participate and lead.
- **Support Inclusive Policies:** Advocate for and support the implementation of inclusive policies and practices in the workplace. Encourage diversity training, mentorship programs, and initiatives that promote equitable opportunities for career advancement and professional development for all employees.



5 Reflective Questions for Non-Black Coworkers to Assess Support for Inclusive Workspaces

	Question	Reflection
1.	Am I actively listening to the perspectives and experiences of my Black coworkers without judgment or defensiveness?	Reflect on your interactions with Black coworkers. Are you truly listening to understand their viewpoints, concerns, and experiences, or are you dismissing or invalidating them?
2.	How do my actions contribute to creating a sense of belonging and inclusion for Black coworkers in the workplace?	Consider the impact of your behaviors and actions on the sense of belonging and inclusion experienced by Black coworkers. Are you actively fostering an environment where they feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute?
3.	Do I challenge bias and discrimination when I encounter it in the workplace, or do I remain silent?	Reflect on instances where you have witnessed bias, or discrimination directed towards Black coworkers. Did you speak up and challenge these behaviors, or did you remain silent? What factors influenced your response?
4.	In what ways am I amplifying the voices and contributions of Black coworkers in meetings and decision-making processes?	Assess your participation in meetings and decision-making processes. Are you actively amplifying the voices and contributions of Black coworkers, or are you inadvertently marginalizing or overshadowing them?
5.	How can I advocate for and support the implementation of inclusive policies and practices in the workplace?	Consider your role in advocating for and supporting inclusive policies and practices. Are there opportunities for you to actively promote diversity training, mentorship programs, or initiatives that promote equitable opportunities for all employees?

Takeaways

- African American employees face disproportionate levels of stress in the workplace due to systemic inequalities and microaggressions, making it necessary for proactive measures to address these challenges and promote equity.
- Resilience factors within the African American community, including strong social networks, cultural pride, and historical resilience, serve as crucial buffers against workplace stress and adversity, highlighting the importance of leveraging cultural strengths to foster well-being.
- Cultivating a culture of inclusivity that celebrates differences and supports all employees, regardless of race or ethnicity, is essential for creating a supportive workplace environment where individuals can thrive and contribute their unique perspectives and talents.



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH IS NOT SIMPLY ASKING, 'HOW CAN I REMEMBER AND LEARN ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE?' IT IS ALL OF US ASKING, 'HOW CAN WE LOVE BLACK PEOPLE BY SEEING THEM, HEARING THEM, AND CREATING A WORLD WHERE BLACK PEOPLE FEEL LOVED, INSPIRED, AND PROTECTED?'

– DANTÉ STEWART



Black Joy Manifesto





Thank You!

Do you have any questions?

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