

## **Asian American Mental Health: Enhancing Wellness through Cultural Activities**

*Mental health is often not discussed in Asian and Asian-American communities for several reasons. First, the “Model Minority” myth enforces the idea that they have to work hard without complaints. Additionally, in many Asian cultures, showing emotions has historically been regarded as a sign of weakness. Finally, younger generations of Asian-Americans may experience feelings of guilt that prevent them from expressing concerns because of the history of older immigrant generations undergoing hardship to acclimate to a new country.*

*For these reasons, Asian-Americans may not reach out for help despite struggling mentally or emotionally. That's why it is so important to proactively discuss Asian American mental health and to cultivate a supportive environment that is inclusive of cultural nuances.*

### **Bringing Culture to Wellness: Introduction to Taiko**

Engaging in wellness practices from one's culture can foster a sense of belonging and connection with one another.

*Taiko* is a traditional Japanese percussion instrument, originally used to drive away evil spirits harmful to crops through its loud sounds. Today, Taiko is performed as “Kumi-Daiko” which is an ensemble of drums at local festivals not only in Japan but also worldwide.

### **The Wellness Benefits of Taiko Drumming**

Taiko drumming requires you to utilize a full-body movement, which is a great way to release stress and stuck emotional energy. In addition, bilateral stimulation, or left-right movement, has been shown to decrease physiological activation, reducing anxiety. Finally, the vibration of the sounds enhances relaxation. Immersing yourself in the sounds and rhythms of Taiko drumming can help you tap into yourself and connect with your emotions.

### **Where Can I Experience Taiko Drumming?**

If you want to experience the full effect of Taiko drumming, it is best to try it yourself! You can visit your local Taiko drumming organization or group, which often offers classes to the general public.

If you don't have access to local groups, you can still appreciate Taiko drumming through videos online such as this one. You can start by listening to the sounds. You can also tap along with the rhythm on your body, a table, or the floor.