

NEWS2

# Dr. Monique Aguirre addresses mental illness, helping ladies learn to stand

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Photo courtesy of Cecelia Petitfrere

Americans suffering from some form of Mental Illness is devastating. According to Mental Health America, over 44 million Americans are affected by some form of mental health issues.

During the month of May, mental illness awareness is observed. In observance of Mental Illness, *rolling out* spoke with Dr. Monique Aguirre, affectionately known as Dr. Mo, regarding her women's conference — We Bend; We Don't Break "Still Standing." The conference will focus on the stigmas of mental illness and discuss ways to openly address the issue.

## Which stigmas affect the Black community regarding mental illness?

There is an embarrassment attached to mental health in the Black community, wherea many feel that they don't have a problem and there is no need to seek help. The stigma lies in the statement of "being crazy," instead of, "I need to talk to someone about my problem or my issues to work through some things."



## In your opinion, what are some steps we can do to change the stigma?

We must provide more information, which is what I am working to do. It is imperative to provide proper tools to inform people about mental health issues to help the awareness, as well as to help in how to identify with certain problems.

## Is “We Bend; We Don’t Break” a way of breaking down stigmas?

The event is a way to help ladies break the silence or the stigma of being embarrassed about abusive relations. It is a silent killer, and this conference is to show other women that you can make it out. You can survive and live on and you have a village around you to help. Just speak out.

## Tell us more about “We Bend; We Don’t Break” and what can people expect?

This conference will be thought-provoking because there are four strong women with four different stories that caused some form of mental disruption within their personal lives. They lived through situations that at a point they did not know if they could or would survive day-to-day. And now they are here to speak about it.

## What are some things you have done to increase a healthy approach to life?

I am a praying woman daily. I eat healthy. And I try to vacation at least three times a year — two small vacations and one big — to relieve stress. I work out at least three times a week.

## What are two valuable insights you’ve learned from counseling experiences?

Everyone is different! There are no two clients the same. Listening is key and being present in the moment is valuable.

## Why?

Listen, to hear the heart of the person, to hear the pain, to understand the diagnosis that must be made. Being present in the moment allows for a clinician to see, hear, determine and understand the client's mental state [and] emotional state, which can help with a treatment plan.

Dr. Monique Aguirre is the Chief Executive Officer of Resilient Counseling, Wellness, & Psychological Services LLC.

