

MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURE

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WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, also known as mental health, significantly impacts how we think, feel, and behave. It shapes our ability to cope with stress, build relationships, and make choices. Throughout our lives, from childhood to adulthood, mental health plays a vital role.

WHAT DOES CULTURE HAVE TO DO WITH MENTAL HEALTH?

According to a National Institute of Mental Health Article, named Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.

- Given its vast array of subgroups and individual nuances, culture holds significance as it influences the characteristics individuals bring into clinical environments. It can explain slight discrepancies in symptom expression and the specific symptoms individuals choose to disclose.
- Culture additionally shapes the interpretations individuals assign to their illnesses. Those seeking mental health services, hailing from culturally diverse backgrounds, naturally bring this richness of diversity directly into the service setting.

Source: Office of the Surgeon General (US); Center for Mental Health Services (US); National Institute of Mental Health (US). Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2001 Aug. Chapter 2 Culture Counts: The Influence of Culture and Society on Mental Health. Available from:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44249/>



CULTURE-BOUND SYNDROMES

Clusters of symptoms exhibit greater prevalence in certain societies compared to others. Additionally, cultural factors significantly impact individuals' likelihood of seeking assistance, the forms of assistance pursued, preferred coping mechanisms, available social support networks, and the degree of stigma associated with mental health conditions. Moreover, cultural norms shape the interpretations and significance individuals attribute to their mental health challenges.

Source: Office of the Surgeon General (US); Center for Mental Health Services (US); National Institute of Mental Health (US). Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2001 Aug. Chapter 2 Culture Counts: The Influence of Culture and Society on Mental Health. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44249/>

GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- LGBTQ community faces higher rates of mental health conditions due to prejudice and biases.
- LGBTQ individuals are nearly 3 times more likely to experience conditions like major depression or generalized anxiety disorder.
- Fear of discrimination and stigma related to sexual orientation and gender identity can lead to depression, PTSD, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse.
- LGBTQ people face both societal bias against mental health and stigma based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Some LGBTQ individuals hide their sexual orientation from mental health professionals for fear of ridicule or rejection, while others conceal their mental health conditions from LGBTQ peers.
- Lack of awareness and discussion about mental health within the LGBTQ community can hinder access to treatment and support.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

<https://www.nami.org/your-journey/identity-and-cultural-dimensions/lgbtq/>



MINORITY STRESS

- Concept stems from several social and psychological theoretical orientations.
- Minority stress theory proposes that sexual minority health disparities can be explained in large part by stressors induced by a hostile, homophobic culture, which often results in a lifetime of harassment, maltreatment, discrimination and victimization and may ultimately impact access to care.

Citation: Dentato, M.P. (2012). The minority stress perspective. *Psychology & AIDS Exchange*, 37, 12-15. American Psychological Association. Washington, D.C. (Spring Issue).

EXTERNAL RESOURCE

Multiple Minority Stress and LGBT Community Resilience among Sexual Minority Men

Citation: McConnell EA, Janulis P, Phillips G 2nd, Truong R, Birkett M. Multiple Minority Stress and LGBT Community Resilience among Sexual Minority Men. *Psychol Sex Orientat Gend Divers*. 2018 Mar;5(1):1-12. doi: 10.1037/sgd0000265. PMID: 29546228; PMCID: PMC5846479.

You can find this resource by scanning the QR code on the right or by visiting:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5846479/>



TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

In healthcare and social services, a trauma-informed approach acknowledges the widespread impact of traumatic experiences. Recognizing that trauma can affect anyone and leave lasting consequences, this approach equips professionals to support individuals, families, and communities. It involves understanding the signs and symptoms of trauma, while creating safe and supportive environments.

Trauma-informed care prioritizes empowerment and building resilience alongside preventing re-traumatization. By fostering collaboration and prioritizing healing throughout the process, this approach aims to address the unique needs of trauma survivors.



STIGMA WITH MENTAL HEALTH

- “Mental health stigma occurs when people have negative thoughts and beliefs of those with mental health illnesses or mental health treatment.”
- Often this stigma causes individuals to avoid treatment until the disorder is very advanced and complex to treat.
- “Mental health stigma is particularly important to understand among ethnic minorities because they may display higher levels of stigma toward those with mental illness and psychotherapy than among European Americans.”
- “A qualitative study suggested that African Americans were likely to feel embarrassment related to mental health problems and seeking treatment, stating that mental health stigma was a significant problem in their community. Another qualitative study found similar beliefs about embarrassment and that this embarrassment kept participants from seeking treatment”.

Citation: DeFreitas SC, Crone T, DeLeon M, Ajayi A. Perceived and Personal Mental Health Stigma in Latino and African American College Students. *Front Public Health*. 2018 Feb 26;6:49. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2018.00049. PMID: 29536000; PMCID: PMC5834514.

- Labels associated with mental health conditions often perpetuate harmful stigmas, compounding the challenges already faced by individuals experiencing such issues. These labels can oversimplify complex experiences, reducing individuals to stereotypes and diminishing their humanity. Moreover, they may foster misconceptions and fear, leading to discrimination and social exclusion.
- It's crucial to recognize the harmful impact of these labels and strive to replace them with language that is respectful, empathetic, and destigmatizing. By fostering understanding, compassion, and acceptance, we can create a more supportive and inclusive environment for individuals living with mental health conditions.





EXTERNAL RESOURCE

Trauma-informed care: What it is, and why it's important

Citation: Trauma-informed care: What it is, and why it's important. *Harvard Health Blog*.
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/trauma-informed-care-what-it-is-and-why-its-important-2018101613562>.

This resource can be used to identify your implicit biases.
You can find this resource by scanning the QR code on the right or by visiting:
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/trauma-informed-care-what-it-is-and-why-its-important-2018101613562>

MARGINALIZATION AND TRAUMA

Marginalization inflicts trauma upon individuals. Those marginalized not only contend with the everyday challenges encountered by everyone but also grapple with the perilous realities of hate and bias directed at their identity. Whether navigating public spaces or seeking refuge in supposedly safe social or religious settings, they endure a persistent state of vigilance and anxiety, even within spaces intended to provide solace and security.



Some ways you can Break the Cycle of Oppression and Mental Health Stigma

1. Refrain from using stigmatizing terms such as "crazy," "psychopath," or "attention seeker" when referring to individuals with mental health disorders. For a comprehensive list of such terms, refer to <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1925070/>
2. Advocate for change by educating your friends about the harmful effects of using stigmatizing language and encourage them to stop using such terms.
3. Reflect on your own biases, both conscious and unconscious, and avoid making assumptions about individuals with mental health disorders. Recognize that each person's experience is unique.
4. Take proactive steps to educate yourself about the historical and contemporary issues faced by marginalized communities, and strive to become an ally in the fight against stigma and discrimination.
5. Embrace the idea that it's okay not to be okay. Acknowledge that experiencing mental health challenges is a natural part of the human experience, and seek out resources and support when needed.
6. Practice active listening when friends or family members share their experiences with mental health or marginalization. Avoid rushing to offer solutions and instead provide a supportive space for them to express themselves.

FOR ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES ON COMBATING MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA VISIT
[HTTPS://WWW.NAMI.ORG/EDUCATION/9-WAYS-TO-FIGHT-MENTAL-HEALTH-STIGMA/](https://www.nami.org/education/9-ways-to-fight-mental-health-stigma/)





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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION GLOSSARY

ACCESSIBILITY	The process of ensuring that information, environments, and experiences are designed to be usable by individuals of all abilities. Its objective is to facilitate full participation and engagement for everyone, eliminating any barriers that may hinder access or interaction.
CULTURE	The collection of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that define a specific group of people, encompassing their knowledge, beliefs, art, laws, customs, and habits.
DIVERSITY	Diversity with regard to people refers to a group of individuals with varying characteristics. Diversity encompasses different dimensions, including visible aspects such as race, age, and ethnicity, as well as invisible aspects such as religion, skills, abilities, socio-economic status, and culture.
EMPOWERMENT	The journey towards obtaining greater autonomy, control, and influence in one's life and decision-making processes. It involves acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to autonomously make choices and pursue personal goals.
EQUITY	Equity pertains to fairness and justice, recognizing that individuals come from diverse backgrounds with varying needs. It aims to establish a level playing field where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, acknowledging that some may require additional support to achieve true equality of opportunity.
INCLUSION	Creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued, and supported, regardless of their background or characteristics. It ensures that everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute fully.
IDENTITY	The unique traits and characteristics that define an individual.
INTERSECTIONALITY	Intersectionality acknowledges that individuals' lived experiences are molded by the intricate connections between their various social identities, such as race, class, gender, and ability. Visualize these identities as overlapping circles in a Venn diagram; the overlapping regions depict intersectionality. For example, a Black woman confronts unique obstacles due to the compounded effects of racism and sexism. By recognizing and understanding these intersections, we can develop targeted interventions and advance more inclusive initiatives within the realm of social justice.
LIBERATION	Breaking free from different limitations. It involves fighting for equal rights and opportunities for a specific group, representing their ongoing struggle for equality against historical oppression.





DIFFICULT-DISCUSSIONS INC. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION GLOSSARY

MARGINALIZATION	Systematic disadvantages experienced by specific groups because of their social identities. It stems from power dynamics within a society, where dominant groups establish and uphold systems that benefit themselves while disadvantaging others.
MICROAGGRESSION	Subtle insults, slights, or invalidations directed at individuals or groups due to their marginalized identity. These seemingly small interactions can convey negative messages and have a cumulative impact on the recipient. They are often unconscious or unintentional expressions of prejudice towards marginalized groups, like racial minorities.
MISINFORMATION	Inaccurate or misleading information spread unintentionally. Unlike disinformation, which is intentionally deceptive, misinformation is shared without malicious intent. Those spreading misinformation may genuinely believe it to be true.
PRIVILEGE	Unearned advantages or benefits that some groups receive based on their social identity, allowing them to live without facing certain disadvantages.
SAVIOUR COMPLEX	A psychological tendency where someone feels a strong urge to help others, sometimes to the extent of neglecting their own needs or becoming overly intrusive. Despite appearing positive, it can create issues in relationships and for the person themselves. People with a savior complex seek to fix others' problems and often see themselves as heroes, but this can result in little impact on challenging oppressive systems effectively.
IMPLICIT BIAS	The attitudes and stereotypes that impact our judgments and actions without our awareness. These biases are shaped throughout our lives, representing social stereotypes about certain groups that individuals form without conscious realization.

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