Talking Tazewell

The Wellness Playbook

Welcome back, Wellness Warriors! As promised, we are revisiting BIPOC mental health. We want to continue to create a safe space to have conversations about the unique challenges that are faced by members of the BIPOC community.

Last edition, we spoke about barriers to care for many BIPOC individuals. This edition, we will highlight stories of resiliency and what we can do to move toward a more equitable society for all.

Together, we can help to create a culture and a community where men feel safe to speak up and seek support. As we've said before (and will continue to say): you are not alone. No one should have to struggle in silence.

DID YOU KNOW...

Psychiatric disorders in childhood have been linked to negative health outcomes. For example, according to <u>Resources to Recover</u> between 50-75% of youth in the juvenile justice system meet the criteria for a mental health disorder. Additionally, more than 25% of Black youth who were exposed to violence have been proven to be at a high risk for PTSD. And yet, both psychiatric and behavioral problems among BIPOC youth often result in incarceration, rarely mental health care.

Tazewell County
Health Department
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Resiliency

We live in a society that applauds resiliency while simultaneously stigmatizing vulnerability by labeling it as a weakness. That being said... if you are going to address resilience within BIPOC communities, you must also acknowledge the reason for the resilience and recognize why many members of BIPOC communities have no other choice but to be strong in the face of adversity.

While researching for this edition, I came across an article from Mental Health America, written by a member of the BIPOC community who discusses things she is tired of hearing during BIPOC Mental Health Month. She shared that while commending a BIPOC individual for their strength or resilience may come from a goodhearted or genuine place, it's true meaning often gets lost in translation. For example, the word "resilience" is discussed a lot when it comes to mental health, and especially BIPOC mental health. The reality is, however, that BIPOC communities shouldn't *have* to put up with these challenges to begin with. Applauding a person for their resilience in the face of systemic racism or community violence almost feels like it's forgetting about those underlying issues that certainly contribute to some BIPOC Mental Health concerns.

What Can We Do As Advocates?

As a provider, we can offer sliding-scale therapy options, making mental health treatment more accessible for those who are left out of health systems, integrate traditional practices with modern therapeutic techniques, equip safe space with culturally grounded mental health tools, collaborate with those who already have the community's trust, support grassroots initiatives that center collective care, and build programs that honor storytelling, community rituals and collective strength.

To care for yourself, reach out to people you trust such as a faith leader or online community, nourish your spirit through traditional practice(s) like journaling, prayer, meditation, dance, storytelling, etc. Look for therapists who honor your identity through networks like Inclusive Therapists. Lean into traditions and cultural practices that have sustained your community.

Lastly, as community members, we can join peer support spaces, encourage emotional check-ins with those you care about, share mental health resources in ways that feel natural, learn basic crisis support techniques and pass them on, mentor someone or offer a listening ear and celebrate emotional wisdom openly across generation. We can also learn about mental health and community care through free events happening in your community, speak up for mental health advocacy in schools and workplaces, support BIPOC-led mental health initiatives with your voice, time or support and demand better policies from legislators. Make your voice heard!

For more information, visit:
BIPOC Mental Health Myth Busting
Navigating the Intersection of Mental Health and Social Justice: Understanding the Impacts of Oppression on Mental Wellness

HAVE AN IDEA OR TOPIC YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT? SEND IT OUR WAY!
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