



Gray Matter Health
Healthy Minds Healthy Relationships

Racism and Mental Health

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Racism

According to the National Association of Social Workers Web site, racism is “the ideology or practice through demonstrated power or perceived superiority of one group over others by reasons of race, color, ethnicity, or cultural heritage....” The definition further goes on to note that “racism is manifested at the individual, group, and institutional level.



Anti-Black Racism

The term 'Anti-Black Racism' was first expressed by Dr. Akua Benjamin, a Ryerson Social Work Professor. It seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black-Canadians and the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black-African descent in Canada.

-Black Health Alliance

Systemic Racism in Canada

Indigenous people of Canada...

- Healthcare: Experiences of racism, including unfair treatment in the health care system as a result of racism, have been reported in multiple Indigenous survey studies, across geographic settings -College of Family Physicians Canada, 2016
- Racial profiling: "It is often directed at First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other Indigenous peoples, as well as people in racialized communities. It is often influenced by the distinctly negative stereotypes that people in these communities face". -Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017
- 75% of Canadians believe RCMP has a problem with systemic racism (esp. involving indigenous people), Nanos Research poll suggests



Systemic Racism in Canada

Black Canadians Are...

- 20X more likely than whites to be injured or killed by Toronto Police officers, according to an interim report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018
- "less likely to have access to gratifying jobs in strategic management positions. More often than not, they are relegated to less favourable positions in the public service and the private sector" due to structural racism. (Policy Options.org, 2019)
- far more likely than any other racial groups to be victims of hate crimes, according to statistics from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety.



Systemic Racism in Canada

Black Canadians...

- Are overrepresented in the prison systems: While African-Canadians make up 3% of the general population, they account for 10% of the federal prison population -Canadian Office of the Correctional Investigator
- Are overrepresented in the child welfare system: Ontario Human Rights Commission report, 2018 revealed that Black and Indigenous children are disproportionately taken into care in Ontario at much higher rates than any other groups.
- Face much harsher punishments in the school systems: 48% of school expulsions were kids who identified as black students compared to only 10% identified as white -TDSB Report 2017, Schools suspensions for black students are much higher and involve police much more often- PDSB report 2020





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"Positive" Stereotypes





**Be Mindful
of Harmful
Stereotypes**



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Types of Unconscious Bias

Halo Effect
Availability Heuristic
Group Think
Confirmation/Implicit Bias





Microaggressions

"a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group"

-Merriam-Webster Dictionary



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Negative Effects of Racism

Along with racism comes a host of negative effects, including mental health problems... racism is perpetuated in our society and can increase someone's risk of developing mental health problems
-Canadian Mental Health Association





Mental Health Concerns

According to a number of studies, some of the mental health concerns of racialized and indigenous groups are:

- Higher levels of anxiety
- Higher levels of stress and stress related illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart disease and nervous system problems
- Higher risk of depression and suicide
- Damaged Self Esteem
- Higher risk of addiction and violence



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Impacts of Anti-Black Racism on Mental Health

Racial Trauma

Secondary Trauma

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Intergenerational Trauma

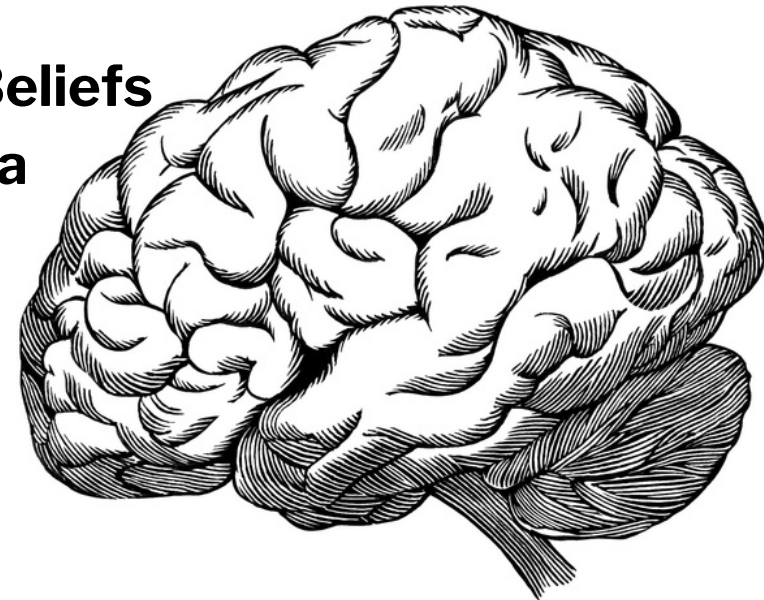
Racial Battle Fatigue

Hyper-vigilance

ACE's

Internalized Negative Beliefs

Internalized Stigma





Racial Battle Fatigue

is...

“the cumulative result of a natural race-related stress response to distressing mental and emotional conditions. These conditions emerged from constantly facing racially dismissive, demeaning, insensitive and/or hostile racial environments and individuals.”

-Race Theorist William Smith, 2008



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The Impact Of Racism On Mental Health:

Feeling disconnected / lonely

Increase risk of
depression and anxiety

Second-guessing things

Decreased hope
(in the future, justice,
the government etc.)

Trauma
(both from the present and
triggering past instances /
generational trauma)

Increased
"Survival Mode"

Existential
questioning
"How can the world
be so cruel?"

Decreased trust



Worry

Feelings of powerlessness
(You can do the right thing and still
end up with a horrific outcome)

Panic

#BlackLivesMatter

@RealDepressionProject





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Systemic Considerations in Human Services -Summary

Leadership recognizing the existence of systemic racism and dedicating resources to the development of anti-racism strategies

Address a culture of denial, discomfort and avoidance regarding racism and its impacts on clients and staff

Increase BIPOC representation in leadership

Increased awareness of BIPOC community needs

Leadership and frontline commitment to anti-racism strategies

Challenging Eurocentric visions of Human Service Delivery

Adequately address issues of the dual shame and stigma of mental illness and poverty



Becoming An Ally



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Reflect
Support
Educate
Influence
Empathize

“Empathy fuels connection.
Sympathy drives disconnection.”
– Dr. Brené Brown



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**"Its not enough to be
quietly non-racist.
Now is the time to be
vocally anti-racist"**



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Thank you



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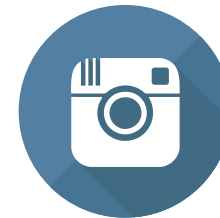


Linked 

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