

SUPPORTING LOVED ONES IN CRISIS- THE BLACK PERSPECTIVE



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And now a word from our sponsors...

HJ
SB

&



Community Agreements



We unapologetically center Black people in our work with particular attention to Black LGBTQ+ people, Black people with disabilities, undocumented Black people, underserved Black people and Black people that speak in African American English, Black immigrants and Black people of darker skin tones.

Take space, make space (be mindful of creating space for many people to share).

Take care of yourself (it's ok to step away, use the restroom, change positions), be mindful of how you are prioritizing this space and time.

Critique the idea, not the person (we hold each other, and want to speak with each other with love even when we disagree).

Center the most impacted (we don't tone police, come as you are).

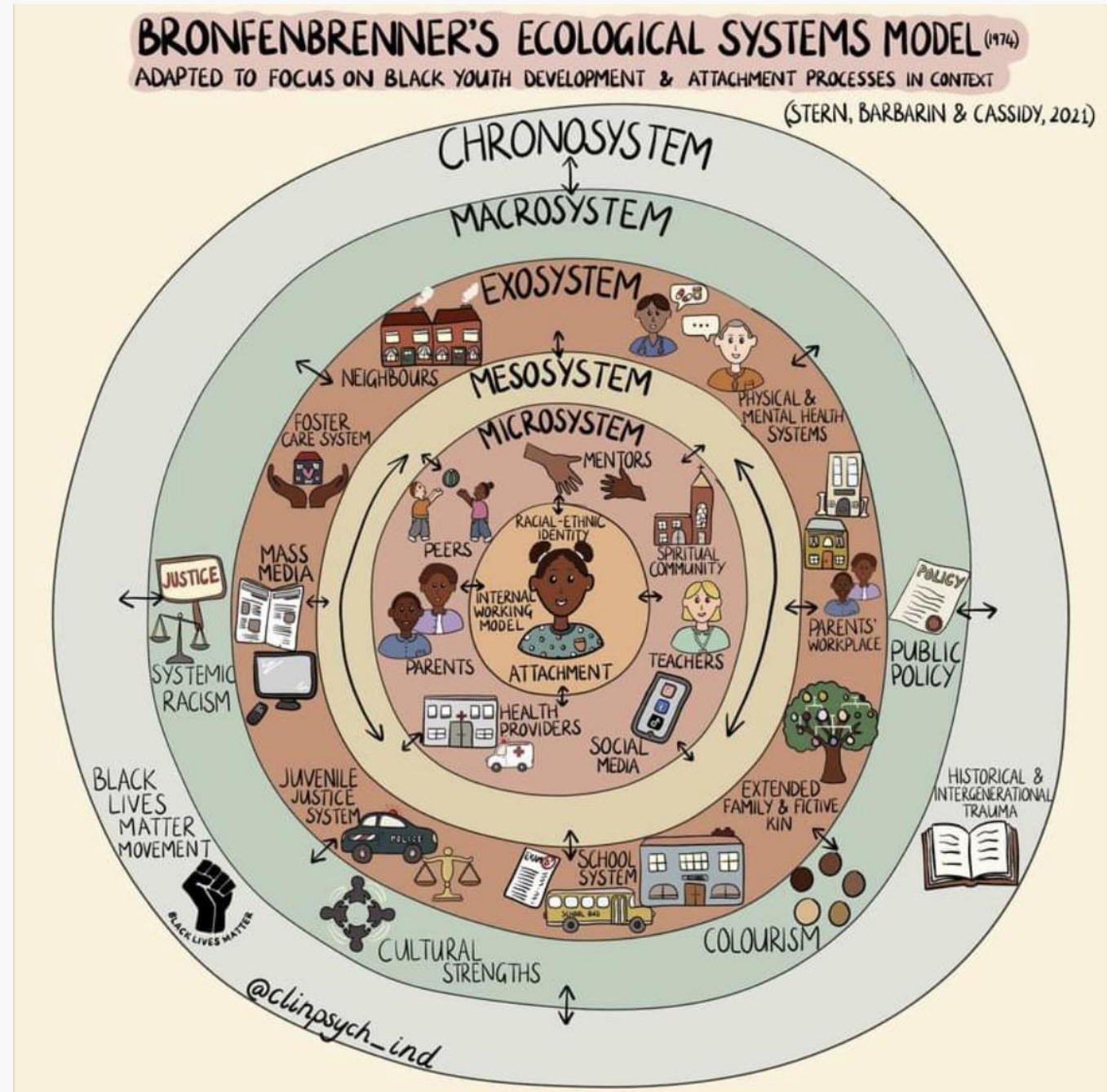
Respect folks full identities including diverse gender expressions .

Share glitter not shade (let's be accountable if we cause harm, but also when someone makes a mistake support them to work through that).

We may need to stop/start recording so that the most impacted people feel able and supported to share.

A Social Justice Perspective on Social-Emotional Learning

Stress due to the implicit bias, race, and privilege in our society, and its physical effects, economic instability and uncertainty, social justice and racial equity issues, isolation, and regular disruptions to daily life may cause increased mental health difficulties in loved ones.



Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Loved ones may be experiencing an increased need for mental health services without access to traditional supports in addition to long standing mistrust of traditional supports
- ***The pandemic has contributed to mental health difficulties, and is a priority as the pandemic continues to impact many facets of everyday life***



Energy Check-In



Energy Check-In

Another way to consider your overall well-being is to reflect on the different energies you need in order to feel healthy, capable, engaged, and happy. These energies can be thought of as physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual energies that we all have, need, and can cultivate. When you don't feel well, it could be that you haven't tended to one of these areas and are out of balance.

Use this reflection tool every few months to check in on your energy. It can help you see where you're doing well in caring for your energy and which dimension might need some attention. You can also download it from www.onwardthebook.com.

Dimension		On a 1–5 scale, rate your agreement with the statement	Dimension Total
Body	I sleep for at least eight hours and wake up feeling rested.		
	I eat a nutritious breakfast almost every day.		
	I exercise at least three times a week.		
	I take little breaks during the day to recharge, and/or I stop work to eat lunch.		
Emotions	I usually feel calm, patient, and content at work.		
	I have enough time with my family and friends, and when I'm with them I feel fully present.		
	I have enough time in my life for the activities that I love doing the most.		
	I regularly stop to appreciate what I have and to relish my accomplishments.		

Mind	I am usually able to focus on the task in front of me, and I don't often get distracted.		
	My days usually go as planned, and I focus on valuable and high-leverage tasks.		
	I have regular time for reflection, planning, and creative thinking.		
	I rarely work in the evenings; I take almost the whole weekend off.		
Spirit	Most of my time at work is spent doing what I do best and enjoy the most.		
	The way I spend my time and energy reflects closely what is most important to me in my life.		
	My decisions at work are influenced by a strong, clear sense of my own purpose.		
	I feel that I'm making a positive difference in the world.		
	TOTAL		

Guide to Scores

68–80: You're doing great at managing your energies. You probably feel really good physically and emotionally.

54–67: You're doing okay at managing your energies. There are probably areas where you feel well and others where you know you need to make improvements.

31–53: You're struggling to manage your energies. You are approaching an energy crisis.

0–30: You're having a major energy crisis. Take action.

Reflect

What did your energy check-in tell you about yourself?

Which dimension is your strongest? Why do you think that is?

Which dimension do you want to care for a little more? What would you gain from focusing on that area?

What could you do today to tend to that dimension a little bit?

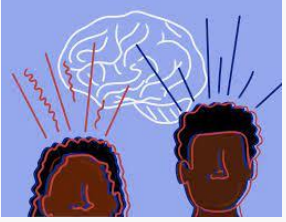
BE AWARE OF YOUR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH



- **We are all resilient**
- **Most children will manage well with the support of parents and other family members, even if having difficulty sleeping or concentrating.**
- Some children may have risk factors for more intense reactions, including severe anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors.
- **Preschoolers**—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal.
- **Elementary school children**—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.
- **Adolescents**—sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, and poor concentration.

Contact a professional if significant changes in behavior or any of these symptoms last for more than 2 weeks.

Supporting Loved Ones' Mental Health: Signs to Monitor



■ What loved ones might talk about:

- *Killing themselves/making suicidal statements like: "I don't want to be here anymore." "I can't do this anymore" "I just want to sleep forever." "I hope I don't wake up tomorrow."*
- *Feeling hopeless*
- *Having no reason to live*
- *Being a burden to others*
- *Feeling trapped*
- *Unbearable pain or sadness and no way to get rid of the pain.*
- *Prior suicidal thoughts/attempt*

■ What loved ones might do:

- *Lack of energy, lethargy and tiredness*
- *Withdrawing, losing interest in things, including their appearance*
- *Isolating from or avoiding family and friends*
- *Stopping telephone or social media contact*
- *Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods*
- *Visiting or calling people to say goodbye*
- *Giving away belongings*
- *Aggression/Anger*
- *Fatigue*
- *Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns*
- *Risk-taking behavior, such as alcohol use, reckless driving, or risky sexual behaviors*
- *Starting or increasing self-harming behavior*

Where do we start?



Ask

- Show you care by asking questions about how they are feeling.
- Trust your instincts and ask the person directly how they are doing.
- Talking about suicide with someone can feel nerve-racking but the best thing to do is ask directly. “Are you thinking about suicide?”
- This will not put ideas in their head and will show them they don’t have to struggle alone with these overwhelming thoughts.
- If you feel they may be struggling let them know that you are worried about them and that you care.
- Many people struggle to reach out for support and sometimes we might need to ask, and ask again, “How are you?”. If you are worried about someone don’t be content with an “I’m alright”.

Listen

- Give them time and space to talk and be helpfully nosy.
- Talking about our fears and feelings can be difficult, even to those closest to us.
- Be patient and give reassurance.
- Have a look at key listening tips.



How to Listen:



Avoid offering solutions – Talking about someone’s problems is not always easy and it’s often tempting to try to offer solutions to their problems such as ‘Have you thought of doing this?’ or ‘You should try that’.

Give them time – It helps if you let them take the time they need to describe where they are at. Make sure you have time to listen. If they feel unable to speak fully at that time, acknowledge the importance of what they’ve said and arrange another time to talk.

Take their feelings seriously – Take whatever they say seriously and without judgment, including their reasons for doing. Don’t offer platitudes like ‘things will pick up’, ‘Life’s too short’ etc and don’t minimize their feelings by saying it’s ‘just a phase’, ‘you’ll grow out of it’ or ‘why is that even bothering you?’

Avoid judgements – You might feel shocked, upset or frightened, but it’s important not to blame the person for how they are feeling. They may have taken a big step by telling you, and comments such as “Don’t you think you might be drinking too much?” can make the situation worse.

You don’t have all the answers – It’s okay to not know what to say! You’re a human being too and what you’re hearing might be frightening and confusing. If you don’t know what to say – be honest and tell that person.

How to Listen Continued:



Reassure them that you are glad they told you – this can be far more empowering and genuine than making something up. If you're honest with them, they'll be honest with you.

Ask open questions – These are questions that invite someone to say more than 'yes' or 'no', such as 'How have you been feeling?' or 'What happened next?'

Offer prompts – We can encourage people to talk more through phrases such as 'Tell me more' or 'Can you say more about that?' or even simply reflecting back an important word or phrase the person has used such as 'Overwhelmed?' or 'No point?'

Give reassurance – That you are there for them and there is support available. You can look together about what organizations and services might be there to help with their problems.

Don't tiptoe around suicide – There is still a taboo around talking about suicide which can make it even harder for people experiencing these feelings to open up and feel understood. If you are worried about them ask directly – 'Are you having suicidal thoughts?' or 'Are you thinking about suicide?'

Take any thoughts of suicide seriously – People who talk about suicide do sometimes act on their feelings – it's a common myth that they don't. It's best to assume that they are telling the truth about feeling suicidal.

Deep Breathing



Deep Breathing



Deep Breathing: a relaxation technique performed by purposefully taking slow, deep breaths. When practiced regularly, deep breathing provides both immediate and long-term relief from stress and anxiety.

How Deep Breathing Works

During periods of anxiety, the body triggers a set of symptoms called the **stress response**. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and muscles become tense. In opposition to the stress response is the **relaxation response**. Breathing becomes deeper and slower, and the symptoms of anxiety fade away. Deep breathing triggers this response.

Instructions

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, if you would like to do so. When you're learning, try placing a hand on your stomach. If you breathe deeply enough, you should notice it rising and falling with each inhalation and exhalation.



- 1 Inhale.** Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- 2 Pause.** Hold the air in your lungs for 4 seconds.
- 3 Exhale.** Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds.
Tip: Pucker your lips, as if you are blowing through a straw, to slow your exhalation.
- 4 Repeat.** Practice for at least 2 minutes, but preferably 5 to 10 minutes.

Tips

- If it isn't working, *slow down!* The most common mistake is breathing too fast. Time each step in your head, counting slowly as you do so.
- Counting out your breaths serves a second purpose. It takes your mind off the source of your anxiety. Whenever you catch your mind wandering, simply return your focus to counting.
- The times we use for each step are suggestions, and can be lengthened or decreased. Lengthen the time if it feels natural to do so, or decrease the time if you feel discomfort.

Building Resiliency:

Adversity is a natural part of life. We all face difficulties. Being resilient is important to dealing with adversity. While most hope that their loved ones never face extreme adversity, successfully facing tough situations can actually foster growth and give loved ones the skills to be more resilient in the future. **Most people have a natural tendency to adapt and bounce back from adversity.** However, we can help our loved ones learn to face challenges successfully.

1. **Think positive!** Modeling positive attitudes and positive emotions is very important. Our loved ones need to hear us thinking out loud positively and being determined to persist until a goal is achieved.
2. **Express love and gratitude!** Emotions such as love and gratitude increase resiliency. Praise should always occur much more often than criticism. Positive emotions buffer us against negative reactions to adversity.
3. **Express yourself!** Resilient people appropriately express all emotions, even negative ones. We can help loved ones become more aware of emotions, label emotions appropriately, and help them deal with upsetting events are giving them useful life skills.



Emotion awareness and control.



- **Myth:** Resilient people tough it out without expressing emotion and keep it all inside and are stoic in the face of adversity.
- **Resilient people—adults and children— are comfortable with their feelings and they express them.** We have a good understanding of our emotions and feel comfortable talking about these emotions with people we trust. So, when a resilient person goes through a tough time, they do feel sad or scared or anxious.
- **However, there is an important difference that distinguishes the more resilient from the less resilient. Resilient people don't get "stuck" in an emotion.** Although you might feel sad or scared, these feelings don't prevent you from coping with the situation and moving forward.
- **When an emotion is too strong, so strong that it interferes with the person's ability to cope, the resilient person knows how to control their emotions so that they are able to push forward with a plan of action.**

Self-efficacy



- **A basic ingredient in resilience is belief in one's self: self-confidence.**
- Believe that you are effective in the world.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses and rely on your strengths to navigate the challenges in life.
- Self-efficacy ≠ self-esteem.
- Self-esteem is about feeling good about one's self and self-efficacy is about affecting change in the world.
- **The road to resilience is through self-efficacy, not self-esteem. If your loved one is confident and knows how to master what life throws in their path, self-esteem will follow.**

Realistic optimism.



- Optimism is another key ingredient of resilience.
- The research on optimism is clear: **Optimistic people are happier, healthier, more productive, have better relationships, succeed more, are better problem solvers, and are less likely to become depressed than pessimistic people.**

Basic Distress Tolerance Skills



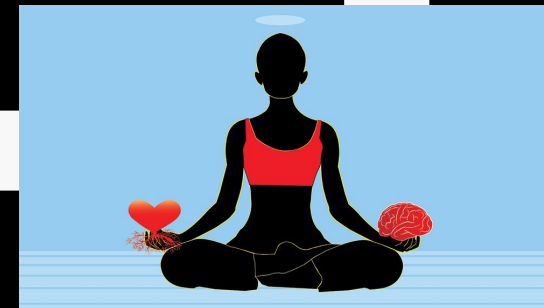
Distress Tolerance Through Distraction

- Distract with pleasurable activities
- Distract yourself by paying attention to someone else
- Distract yourself by counting
- Distract with tasks or chores
- Self-soothe using your senses



Distress Tolerance Through Acceptance

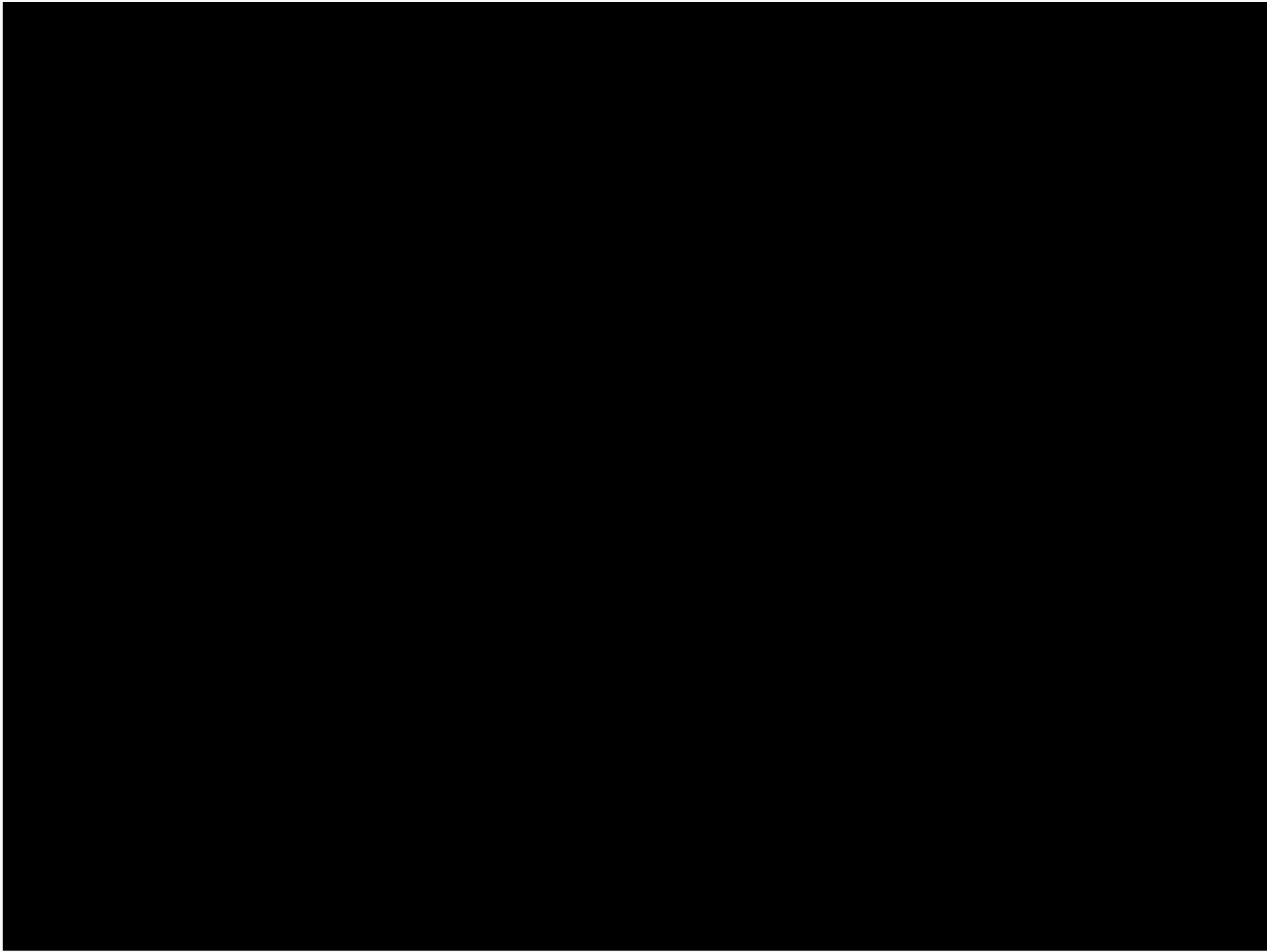
- Increasing your ability to tolerate distress starts with a change in your attitude. Remember, sometimes pain can't be avoided, but many times suffering can.
- Often, when a person is in pain, their first reaction is to get angry or upset or to blame someone for causing the pain in the first place. **Thinking that a situation should never have happened, you're missing the point that it did happen and that you have to deal with it.**
- Acceptance is to acknowledge your present situation, whatever it is, without judging the events or criticizing yourself.
- **Refocus your attention on what you can do now.**



Supporting Loved Ones' Mental Health: Tips



- **Create a sense of belonging.** Feeling connected and welcomed is essential to a positive adjustment, self-identification, and sense of trust in others and themselves.
- **Encourage good physical health.** Good physical health supports good mental health. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect us against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.
- **Encourage helping others.** We need to know that they can make a difference. Prosocial behaviors build self-esteem, foster connectedness, reinforce personal responsibility, and present opportunities for positive recognition. Helping others and getting involved reinforces community connectedness.
- **Ensure access to mental health supports.** (e.g., therapy, spiritual, religious, holistic, etc.)



The Misunderstood Schema of the Strong Black Woman: Exploring Its Mental Health Consequences and Coping Responses Among African American Women



(Liao, Wei, & Yin, 2020)

How can we rethink this narrative?

- “Asset and a liability”
- Provided resilience through centuries of oppression
- Tied to maladaptive perfectionism & associated with low self-compassion
- Less likely make use of collective coping
- Retain aspects of the narrative that provide a sense of purpose, meaning, philanthropy & community
- Self-compassion as an inner resource to sustain our strength
- Self-compassion ≠ self-indulgence
- Be aware of idealized messages we send to our daughters in order to disrupt intergenerational trauma

Mindfulness





How to Meditate Er. Rohit Sharma

For meditation the first thing is the posture, you may sit in any posture.
The posture must be very comfortable and stable.
We can meditate either on a floor or on a chair.
We can meditate in any place wherever we feel comfortable.
Sit comfortably.
Cross your legs clasp your fingers.
Now, close your eyes.
Stop inner or outer chatter.
Don't chant any mantra just relax.
Totally relax... just relax
When we cross our legs and clasp our fingers, energy circuit is formed and gives more stability.
Eyes are doors of the mind, so eyes should be closed
Mantra chanting any chattering inner or outer are the activities of the mind.
So it should be stopped.
When body relaxes consciousness travels to the next room.
Mind and intellect, mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts.
There are numerous thoughts always coming to the surface of the mind.
Whenever there are thoughts in the mind, we may get many questions known or unknown.
To transcend the mind and intellect, one has to observe the breath.
Observation is the nature of the self, so one should just witness the breath.
Don't do conscious breathing.
Don't inhale or exhale consciously
Let inhalation or exhalation happen on its own, just observe the normal breathing.
This is the main key... this is the wing.
Don't go behind the thoughts.
Don't cling to queries, questions, or thoughts.
Let the thought come back to the breath, observe normal breathing.
Be with your breath, then the density of the thoughts reduces.
Slowly breath becomes thinner and shorter.

Finally, breath becomes the smallest and settles like a flash in between the eyebrows.
In this state one will have no breath and no thought, he will be totally thoughtless.
This state is called the "No-Thought State," this is the meditative state.

In this state we will be under the shower of cosmic energy.
The more meditation one does, the more will be the cosmic energy one receives
This cosmic energy flows through the energy body.

mind·ful·ness

'mīn(d)f(ə)lnəs/

noun

1.the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something. "their mindfulness of the wider cinematic tradition"

2. a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

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Q&A