

Shame and Stigma: Re-imagining Masculinity and Strength for Black Boys

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Black Mental Wellness

April 4, 2023, 12:00 PM





MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

The purpose of the MHTTC Network is technology transfer - disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.

Funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the MHTTC Network includes 10 Regional Centers, a National American Indian and Alaska Native Center, a National Hispanic and Latino Center, and a Network Coordinating Office.

Our collaborative network supports resource development and dissemination, training and technical assistance, and workforce development for the mental health field. We work with systems, organizations, and treatment practitioners involved in the delivery of mental health services to strengthen their capacity to deliver effective evidence-based practices to individuals. Our services cover the full continuum spanning mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery support.

The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND
ACCEPTING OF
DIVERSE CULTURES,
GENDERS,
PERSPECTIVES,
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

RESPECTFUL, CLEAR
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH
OUR ACTIONS,
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

MHTTC Network

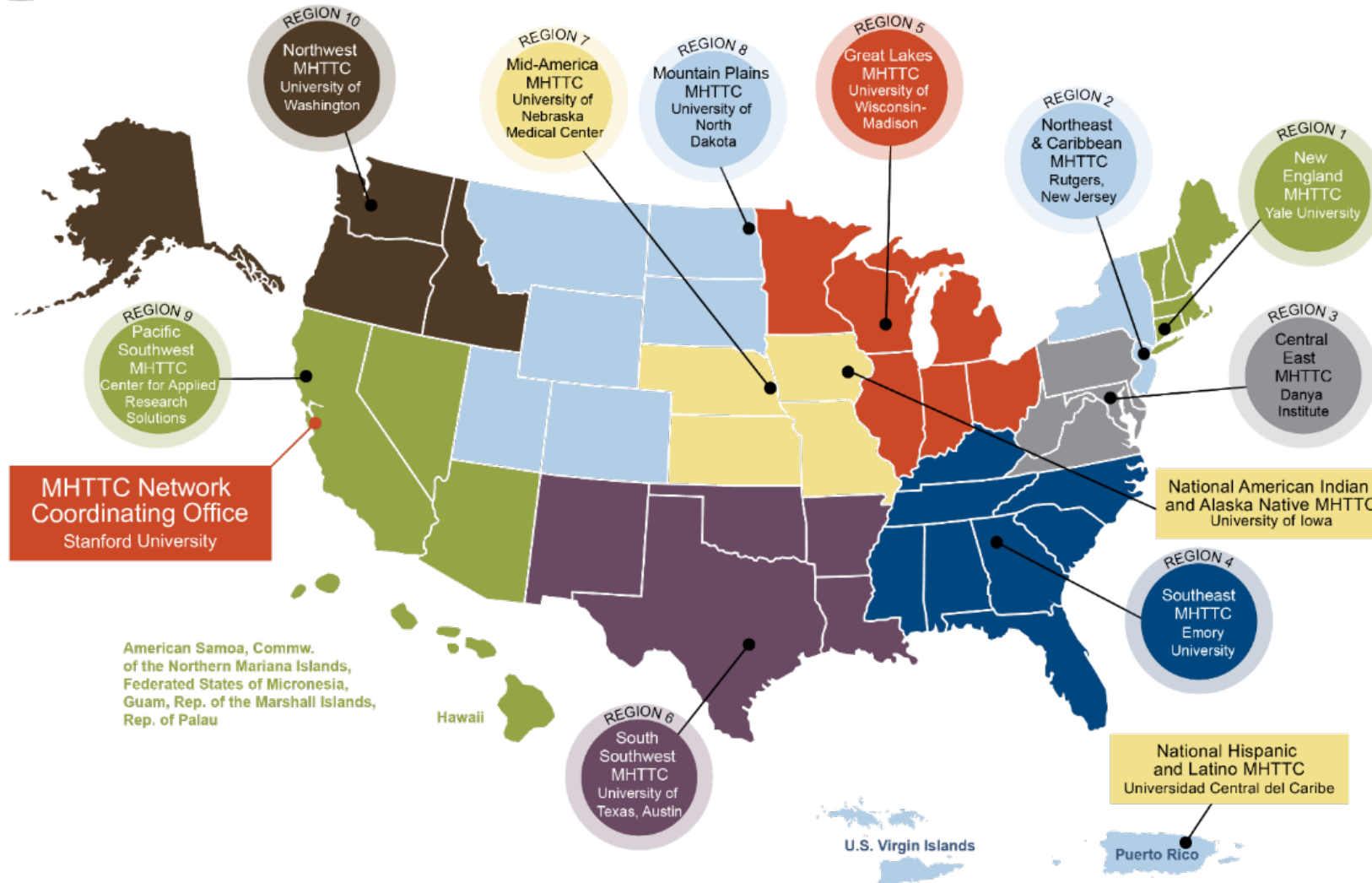


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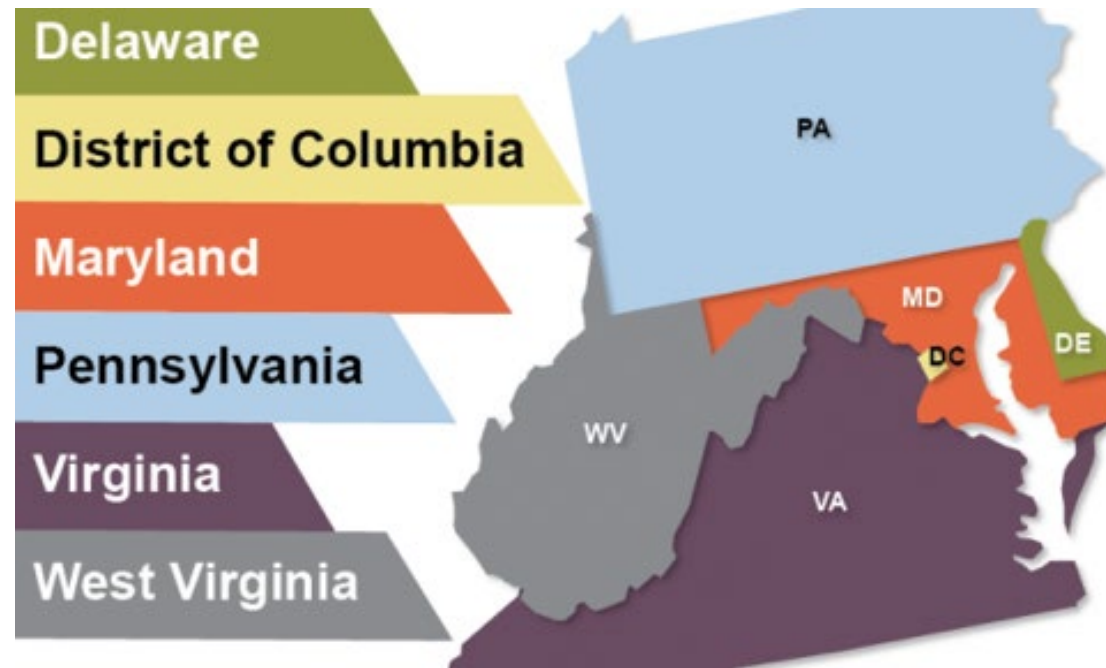
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

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MHTTC Network



Central East Region 3



Central East (HHS Region 3)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

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Acknowledgment

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At the time of this publication, Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D, served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The opinions expressed herein are the views of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred.

This work is supported by grant SM081785 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Presented 2023

Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

- **Dr. Nicole L. Cammack:**
President & CEO
- **Dr. Danielle R. Busby:**
Professional Relations & Liaison
- **Dr. Dana L. Cunningham:**
Community Outreach & Engagement
- **Dr. Jessica S. Henry:**
Program Development & Evaluation



Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

The Mission of Black Mental Wellness

- To provide information and resources about mental health and behavioral health topics from a Black perspective
- To highlight and increase the diversity of mental health professionals
- To decrease the mental health stigma in the Black community

[Black Mental Wellness website](#)



Join Us for the remainder of the series!

May 2, 2023: **Barriers and Risk Factors for Black LGBTQ+ Youth:
Suggestions for Improving their Lived Experiences**

June 6, 2023: **Black Youth Suicide: Exploring a Public Health
Crisis and the Role of Racial Trauma**

All webinars will be held from 12-1 EST

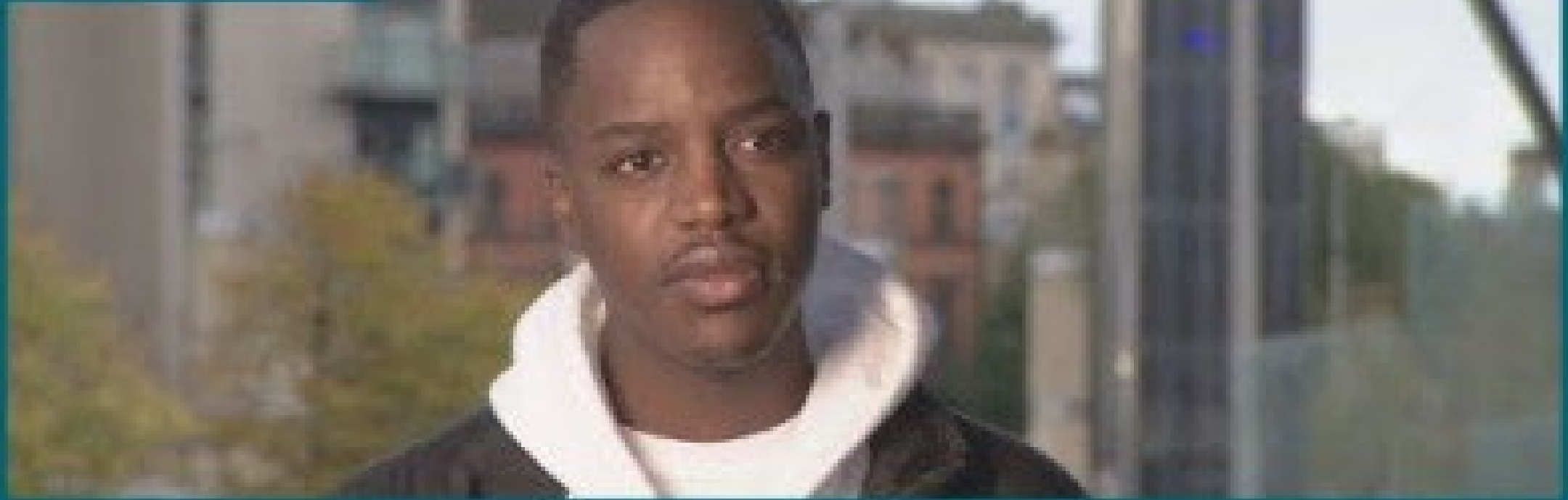
Objectives

1. Identify social influencers of health that negatively impact the mental health and wellbeing of Black boys and may contribute to increased risk of suicide.
2. Understand the impact of shame, stigma, and grief on mental health and wellness and the challenges with vulnerability and help seeking among Black boys.
3. Identify at least 2 strategies to reduce the stigmatization of mental health and improve the mental health and wellness and support for Black boys.

- STOP when you notice heightened emotions
 - **S**low Down
 - **T**ake some deep breaths
 - **O**bserve what you are feeling in your body
 - **P**rocess and proceed



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THE MENTAL HEALTH TOLL FACING BLACK MEN

Social Determinants of Health

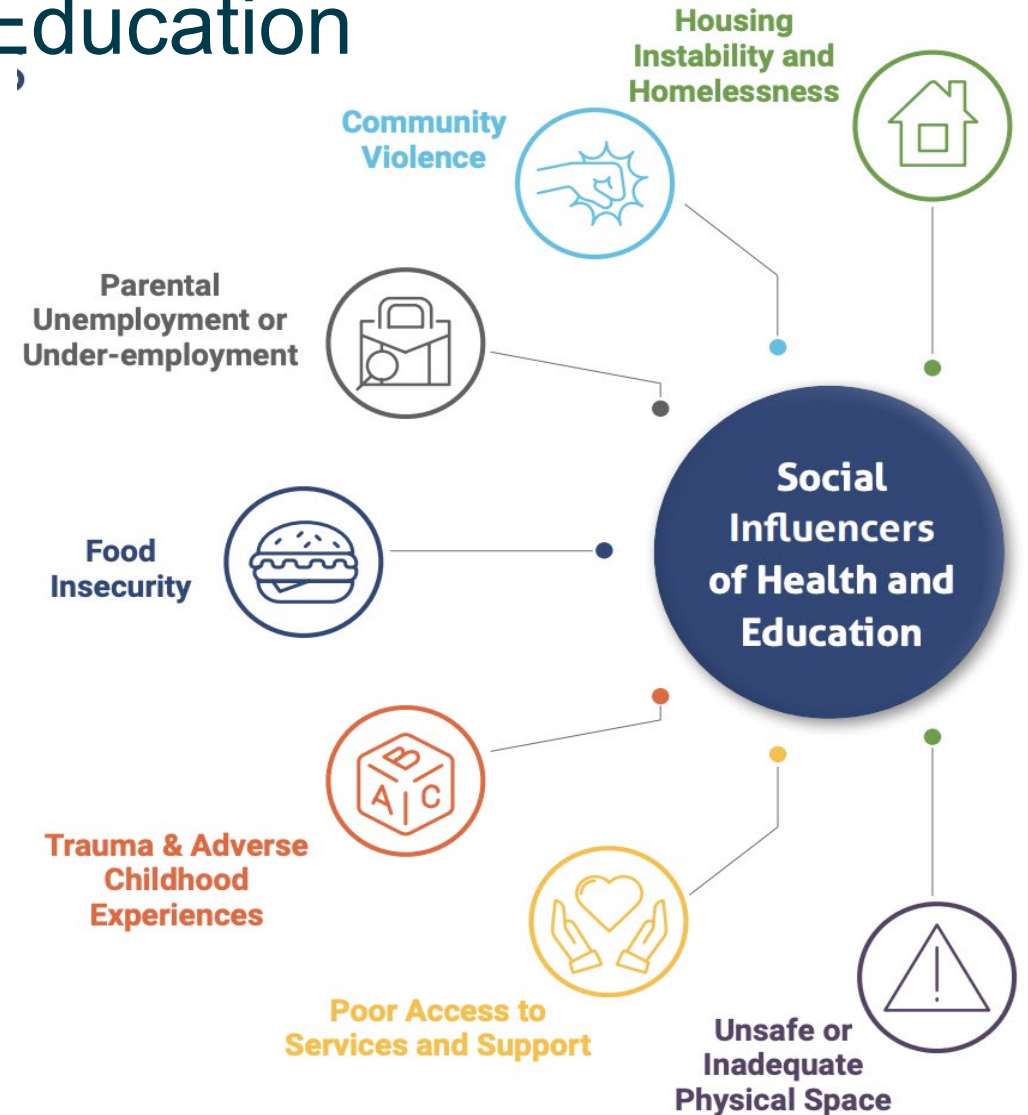
The conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play and age that impact a wide range of health, functioning and quality of life outcomes.

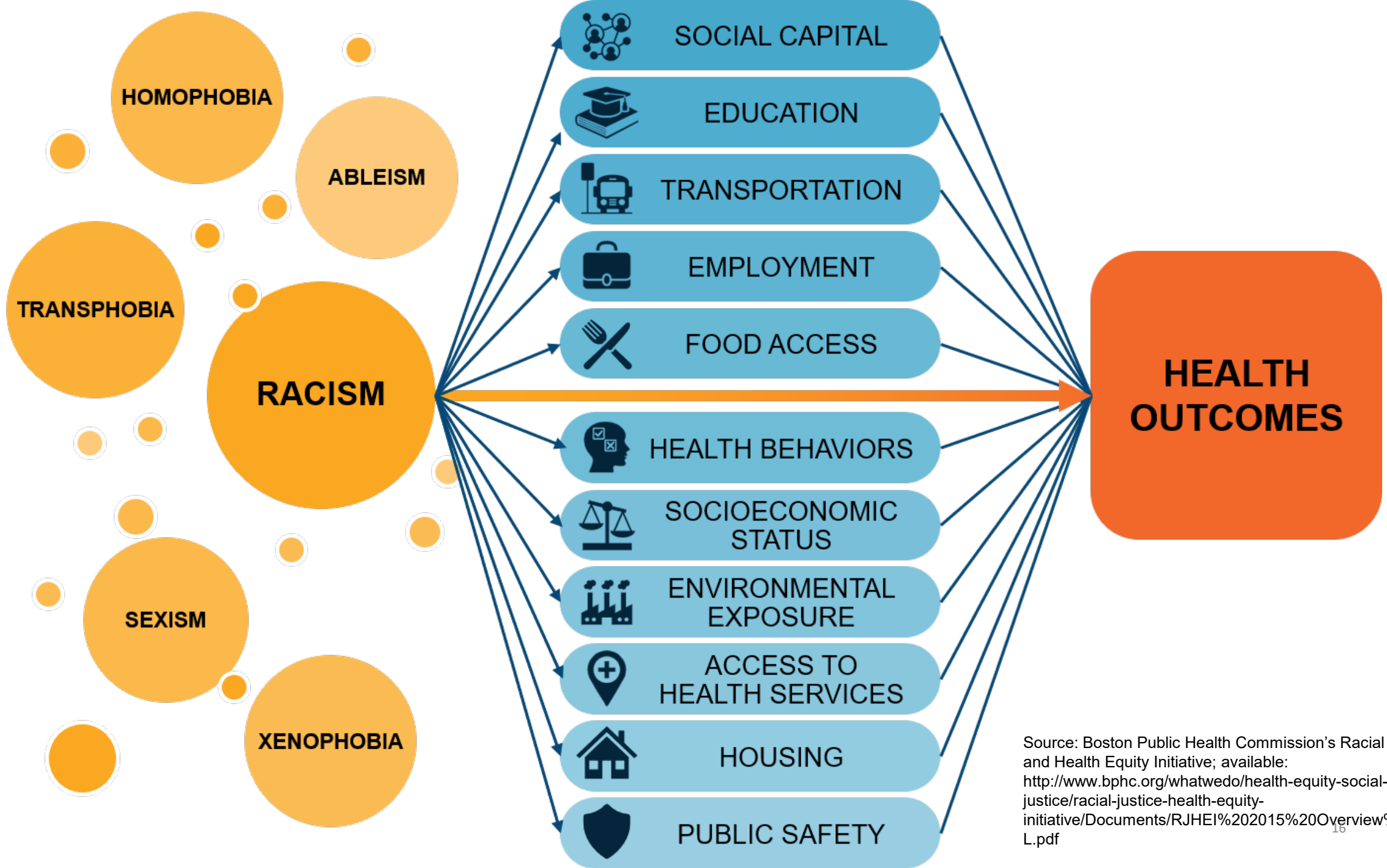
(Healthy People, 2020)



Social Influencers of Health and Education

- SIHE are rooted in the social determinants of health
- *A child's health status and educational achievement* are influenced by multiple factors, many of which are external to the individual
- Often experienced disproportionately by race and ethnicity and contribute to health inequities, learning disruptions, and opportunity gaps





Source: Boston Public Health Commission's Racial Justice and Health Equity Initiative; available: <http://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/health-equity-social-justice/racial-justice-health-equity-initiative/Documents/RJHEI%202015%20Overview%20FINAL.pdf>

Examples of Inequities

EDUCATION: Youth of color are more likely to be placed in special education and suspended from school

INCARCERATION: Youth of color are more likely to be arrested at school and referred to law enforcement

PUBLIC SAFETY: 1 in 1,000 Black men or boys will be killed by the police in their lifetime

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE: More than 85% of youth who live in urban areas witness some form of community violence and almost 70% experience direct victimization

SERVICE PATHWAYS: Youth of color experience greater delays in accessing mental health care services and are less likely to be screened for mental health concerns

(Alvarez et al., 2022; American Public Health Association, 2020; Children's Defense Fund, 2021; McDonald et al., 2011)

Suicide in Black Youth: A State of Emergency

- Suicide rate of youth aged 5-12 is almost twice as high for Black youth compared to White youth (CDC, 2018)
- Suicide rate among 10-17 increased by 70% between 2006 and 2016
- Between 2018 – 2021, suicide rate among 10 -24-year-olds increased by 37%
- Only about a third of Black youth who have died by suicide were in mental health treatment or had a documented mental health problem (Sheftall, Vakil, Ruch et al., 2021)
- Among Black youth who have died by suicide, behavioral disorders (not depression) were the most prevalent mental disorders
- Highest rate of suicide attempts have been reported by Black girls in last two years of YRBS data collection (CDC, 2022)

Why is suicide increasing in Black Youth?

Mental health

Racism and
discrimination

Adverse
Childhood
Experiences

Violence
exposure

Stigma

Limited access
to mental
health care

Social Media

Misdiagnosis

Mistrust of
providers

Gender and
sexual identity

Bullying

Implicit bias of
providers

Risk Factors for Suicide in Black Youth

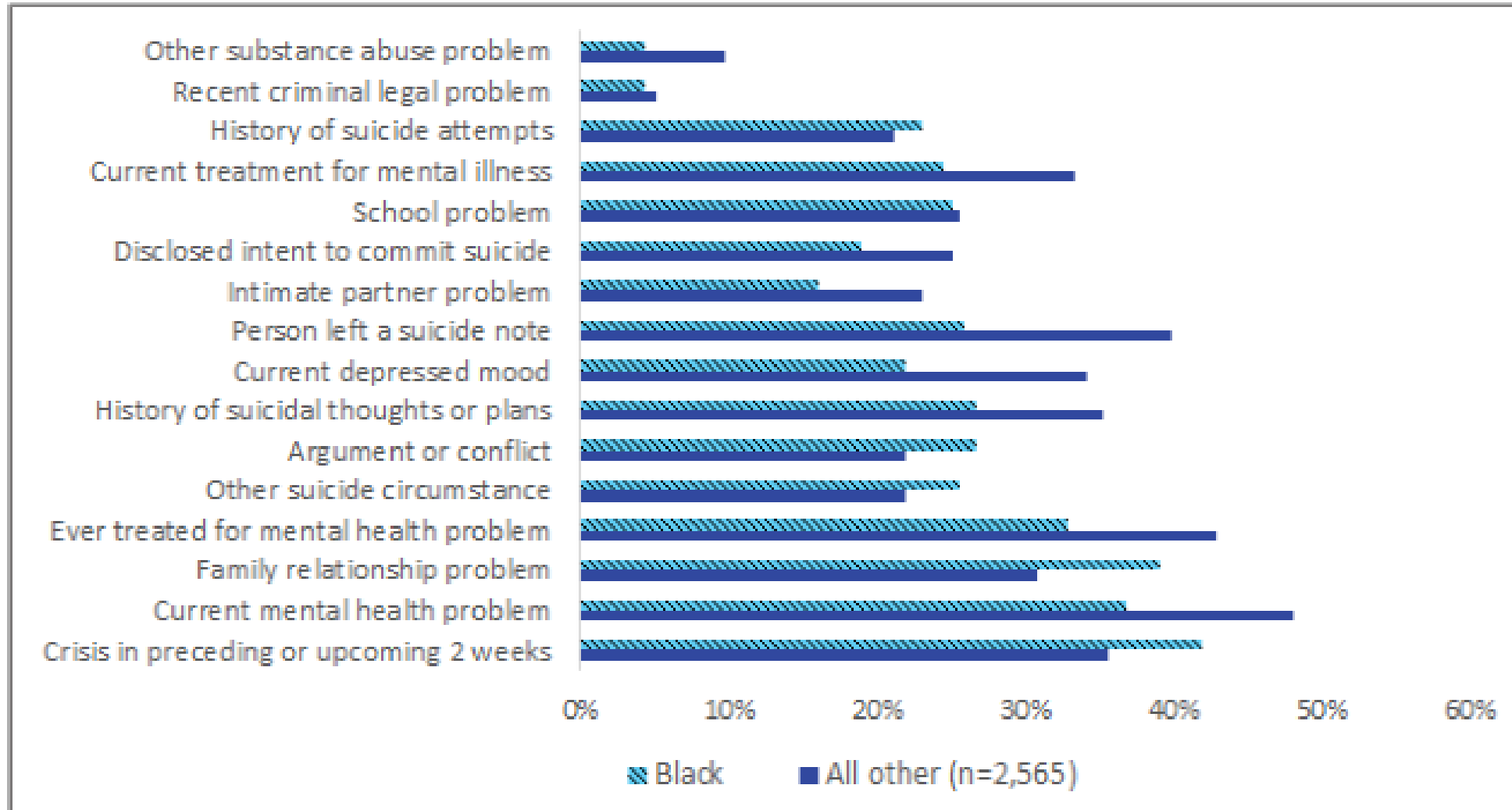
Interpersonal problems with family and friends

Higher rates of ADHD

Social determinants of health:

- Lower SES
- Lower educational achievement
- Unemployment
- Living in high poverty neighborhoods and homelessness
- Homelessness
- Racial discrimination

Figure B-2. Circumstances* preceding suicide among children aged 10 to 17, by race—United States, 2014–2017



Black Masculinity, Grief, Shame, & Stigma on Help-Seeking

Black Masculinity

Media/Social Media

- Depicted as overly masculine, aggressive, and hypersexual
- Displays of emotions are often not deemed socially acceptable (weak, soft, emotional)

Research

- Black boys as young as 10 are perceived as less innocent, mistaken as older, perceived as guilty, and face police violence if accused of a crime compared to peers
- “Black male, maybe 20, black revolver, black handgun by him..” (Tamir Rice, age 12)
- A “a suspicious person” (Trayvon Martin, age 17)

Race, discrimination, and police brutality

- Unarmed killings of Black boys and men by police are often replayed continuously on social media and the news, may negatively impact mental health, feelings of safety, masculinity, and feelings of value in society
- Black youth experience disproportionate encounters with police at a younger age

Grief

The response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or some living thing that has died, to which a bond or affection was formed.

Black youth experience more deaths of friends and family members than white youth

- Homicide the leading cause of death for Black males 15-24
- Maternal mortality more than three times higher for Black mothers
- Black people have higher death rates for chronic care conditions (heart disease, cancer, diabetes)

Grief and loss associated with health and well-being

- Increased mental and behavioral health symptoms
- Increased hypervigilance and vulnerability
- Increased risky behaviors
- Poorer physical health
- Decline in cognitive functioning and academic achievement
- Decreased social support and trust
- Decreased resources and increased financial strain

Shame

A painful feeling of humiliation or **distress** caused by the **consciousness** of wrong or **foolish** behavior. (Shame says “I am bad”)

How do we shame Black boys?

- Giving a disapproving look
- Telling embarrassing or revealing stories
- Sharing private conversations
- Ridiculing or accusing

How do Black boys experience shame?

- Through embarrassment and fear of asking for help
- Masking their feelings and avoiding them
- Acting out, increased aggression, isolation/withdrawal
- Not trusting others to protect them or their feelings

Stigma

A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something

How is mental health stigmatized among Black boys?

- Familial shame often stems from a broader cultural **stigma** surrounding mental health in the Black community
- Asking for help or going to therapy a sign of weakness (“we pray or ask God for help”)
- Parents seeking to protect their Black boys from being viewed as a greater societal threat
- Societal mistrust of the various systems (“we do not share our business with anyone outside of our family”)

“Man up.”

“Man up” is a term used when Black boys and men are dealing with challenges, to push their feelings aside and step up to handle a problem

- Research suggests that many Black men equate being a “real man” to providing for family, achieving respect of others, financial success, tough, self-sufficient, and in control of emotions and feelings.
- “Boys don’t cry.” and other statements that reinforce messages that emotional health does not serve as a positive value for boys and men.
- Emphasis placed on success of physical activities such as sports, particularly for boys of a certain height or stature
- **Black masculinity norms negatively affect help-seeking behavior among Black men and exacerbated symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.**

Help-Seeking Behaviors

- Black masculinity and “man up” prevents expressions of vulnerability
- Grief, shame and stigma obstructs the help-seeking process

Lindsey, Joe, & Nebbitt (2010)

- For Black boys, crying was seen as a sign of weakness among friends
- Black boys reported family members were the first to help identify their mental health symptoms
- Black boys sought support first from family members for depressive symptoms
- Black boys viewed mental health professionals as “outsiders”
- Negative perceptions of mental health providers was transmitted through family members

Scenario

Johnathan, a 15-year-old Black boy, who lost his father to prostate cancer at the age of 12, currently lives with his mother and two sisters. After his father's death, his mother moved their family to a less expensive home in a lower socioeconomic neighborhood due to financial strain and the loss of income. When Johnathan was 14 years old, his 16-year old brother died of neighborhood gun violence. Currently, at the age of 15, Johnathan has started skipping school, failing classes and fighting, and socially isolates from everyone in his household and most of his friends. After the death of his older brother, he was repeatedly reminded that he is now the man of the house so he has to man up and take care of his mother and sisters. Most recently, Johnathan broke down and started crying while talking to a girl he was dating. A day or two later, the girl he was dating stated that she felt uncomfortable seeing him cry and started avoiding his calls. Johnathan feels lost and confused.

Work together to review the scenario and identify and discuss the following:

1. How did Johnathan's life change as a result of multiple deaths?
2. Do you think Johnathan was experiencing shame associated with how he was feeling?
3. How do you think negative perceptions associated with mental health were communicated directly or indirectly to Johnathan?
4. Discuss the likelihood of Johnathan seeking mental health support now or in the future?
5. How should we begin to help Johnathan?

Ways to Support Black Boys

Social Influencers of Health and Education

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Protective Factors

- Families, caring adults, and/or schools that provide safe, supportive, and affirming environments
- Family cohesion
- School connectedness
- Sense of belonging
- Problem solving and coping skills
- Positive peer relationships
- Spirituality
- Strong sense of ethnic identity

Ways to Support Black Boys

Reduce Shame

- Redefine masculinity
- Provide validation and empathy
- Communication about mental health and stressful life experiences
- Ask directly, “Have you contemplated suicide.”
- Stop use of stigmatizing language (“Boys don’t cry”)
- Support groups and safe spaces to discuss emotions

Recognize signs of depression and suicide

- Black boys are less likely to report (current known mental health problem/disorder, current depressed mood, history of SI, history, or past/current treatment for mental illness)
- Moodiness, Irritability, anger
- Recognize pressures of being a Black boy and discuss and/or connect to appropriate care to process



Re-imagining Masculinity and Strength

Shifting Mental Health Field

Decrease barriers to mental health care access (e.g., school-based mental health services, cost)

Develop a pipeline to diversify the field and actively recruit and retain mental health providers of color

Require education and trainings of mental health providers on how to assess and treat Black youth and their unique experiences

Early detection of mental health concerns and enhanced screening, including the impact of shame, guilt, and racial experiences on mental health

Increased funding for suicide prevention research in Black communities

Education

It is important to educate everyone on the rise in suicide completions among Black youth, the signs and symptoms of suicidal behaviors, and the unique risk factors among Black youth.

- Youth
- Families
- Schools/Educators
- Mental health providers
- Pediatricians
- Community organizations
- Researchers
- Policies
- Funding (research, community organizations, mental health services)



Resources



[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

Therapy Resources

[Open Path Psychotherapy Collective \(Affordable Therapy\)](#)

[The LoveLand Foundation \(Vouchers for Therapy\)](#)

[Black Men Heal](#)

Black Men Heal is a nonprofit that provides FREE mental health treatment-both individual and group therapy to Men of Color.

[Therapy for Black Kids](#)

Dedicated to helping Black parents raise healthy kids in the 21st century.

Therapy Resources (cont.d)

[Therapy for Black Men](#)

Aims to break the stigma that asking for help is a sign of weakness through a directory of close to 600 therapists throughout the US trained to provide judgment-free, multiculturally-competent care to Black men.

[The Trevor Project](#)

The Trevor Project's mission is to end suicide among LGBTQ young people.

[YBMen Project](#)

This culturally-sensitive, age-appropriate, and gender-specific program uses a private social media group (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to provide mental health education and social support to young Black men by using information and prompts from social media and popular culture (e.g., YouTube videos, photos, lyrics, and current headlines).

Resources

[BROTHER, YOU'RE ON MY MIND](#)

To help start conversations about mental health, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and NIMHD have launched *Brother, You're on My Mind: Changing the National Dialogue Regarding Mental Health Among African American Men*.

[Black Boys OM, Inc.](#)

Aims to impact local communities, with a specific focus of serving the wellness practice of Black Boys and Black Men in Faith Organizations, Schools, Community Centers, and Yoga /Wellness Studios.

[Embrace Race](#)

A multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges that race poses to our children, families, and communities.


Resources (cont.d)

- [YBMen Project](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- [Silence the Shame](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- [Racial Trauma Guide](#)
- [MHTTC Network](#)

AN INSTANT HELP SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOK FOR TEENS

HEALING RACIAL STRESS WORKBOOK FOR BLACK TEENS

Skills to Help You Manage Emotions, Resist Racism & Feel Empowered



Respond to racial stress & trauma • Deal with microaggressions • Build resistance & resilience

JESSICA S. HENRY, PHD | FARZANA T. SALEEM, PHD | DANA L. CUNNINGHAM, PHD
 NICOLE L. CAMMACK, PHD | DANIELLE R. BUSBY, PHD
 Foreword by Howard C. Stevenson, PhD

A HEALING JOURNAL FOR BLACK MEN

PROMPTS TO HELP YOU REFLECT, GROW, AND LIVE WITH PRIDE

Danny Angelo Fluker Jr.


brennan allan steele



breathe.
 a guided healing journal
 FOR BLACK MEN

THE INSTANT #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

BLACK BOY JOY




17 Stories Celebrating Black Boyhood

EDITED BY KWAME HEALIA

THE UNAPOLOGETIC GUIDE TO BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

Navigate an Unequal System, Learn Tools for Emotional Wellness, and Get the Help You Deserve

RHEEDA WALKER, PhD
 FOREWORD BY NA'IM AKBAR, PhD



My Grandmother's Hands

Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies

RESMAA MENAKEM
 MSW, LICSW, SEP

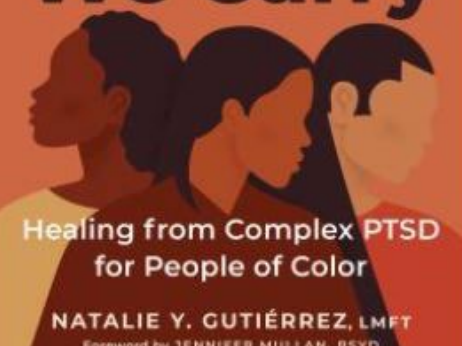
A NEW HARBINGER SOCIAL JUSTICE HANDBOOK

RECLAIMING WHOLENESS
 DESPITE THE BURDENS OF SYSTEMIC,
 INTERGENERATIONAL & ATTACHMENT TRAUMA

The Pain We Carry

Healing from Complex PTSD for People of Color

NATALIE Y. GUTIÉRREZ, LMFT
 Foreword by JENNIFER MULLAN, PSYD



For More Information

[Black Mental Wellness Website](#)

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Dr. Jessica Henry: DrHenry@BlackMentalWellness.com

Social Media



Black Mental Wellness



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If you missed the March 1st Webinar:

**Social Influencers of Health & Suicide in Black Youth, Watch [the
Social Influencers of Health & Suicide in Black Youth recording](#)**

Appreciation



Contact Us



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Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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Let's connect:

