

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Support BIPOC Mental Health Month in July

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Mental Health Month brings awareness to the unique mental health challenges of racial and ethnic groups that have historically faced disenfranchisement and oppression.

Black and Indigenous individuals and other people of color experience a broad spectrum of discrimination, oppression and systemic racism, which creates the conditions for both individual and collective traumas within their communities. Connection with culture and community, as well as feeling a sense of belonging, is vital for the mental health and wellbeing of all people. Individuals who have strong connections within a healthy physical environment have better mental health outcomes and their communities experience lower rates of suicide, violence and feelings of isolation. Humans are social creatures and meaningful connections allow us to share interests and feel a sense of purpose. For BIPOC individuals, making deep connections with people of a similar background or lived experience not only provides a



sense of belonging and solidarity, but is also a necessary means for thriving. Through the power of community connection, BIPOC individuals can realize their full potential and sustain their cultural values.

Here are some tips on how to support your community and yourself in creating healthy spaces:

- » **Educate others.** Talk to your friends and family about why it's important to create spaces that are welcoming and inclusive for people..
- » **Start conversations.** Speak openly about your mental health, which may encourage others to share their own experiences and concerns.
- » **Organize wellness events.**

Work with community organizations, leaders, and mental health professionals to organize events and activities that promote connection and cultural expression.

- » **Advocate for the creation of safer spaces.** Consider how you might support making your community center, spiritual gathering place, or educational facility a safer space for people to feel comfortable to talk about their mental health challenges without fear of judgment or stigma.
- » **Seek support.** Connect with mental health professionals and community resources to get the support you need in your neighborhood or community.

— Adapted from Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Services