

TRANSFORMING HURT BOYS INTO RESTORED MEN

THE LACK OF MENTAL HEALTH
TREATMENT FOR BLACK MALE
TRAUMA SURVIVORS

DR. SHERICKA D. SMITH, DSW, LCSW

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ABOUT ME...

Dr. Shericka Smith was born and raised in Lexington, Kentucky and is a mental health coordinator for Fayette County Public Schools. Shericka obtained an undergraduate degree from Transylvania University where she studied Spanish and Psychology. She then earned her Masters in School Social Work from the University of Louisville. In May 2022, she graduated with her Doctorate in Social Work from the University of Kentucky where she is currently teaching classes for the College of Social Work. She also manages a mental health private practice, Wellness Within, working with people of all ages.



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Objectives

What is trauma and how does untreated childhood trauma impact Black males?

Why do Black male trauma survivors rarely seek mental health treatment?

How can we help?

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TRAUMA

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Black people endure traumatic experiences at a higher rate than their White peers, yet they are less likely to seek mental health treatment. This results in poor mental health outcomes in adulthood.

What is trauma

? When one is overwhelmed by an event and responds with intense fear, horror, or helplessness

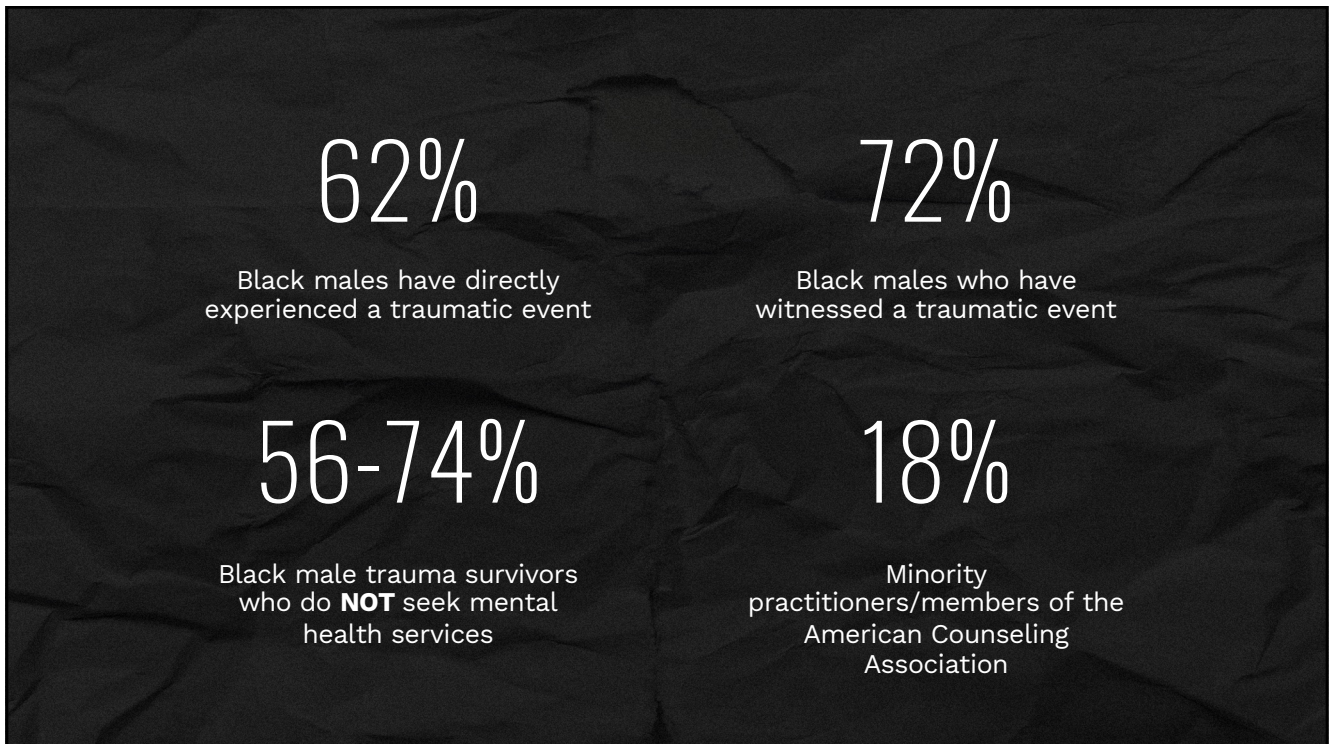
**neglect, accidents, acts of violence, physical or sexual abuse, etc.*

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Trauma for Black Families

- Poverty and Economic Hardship**
Financial/food insecurity, lack of access to quality healthcare and education
- Systemic Racism**
Experiences of discrimination, racial profiling, police brutality
- Historical Trauma**
Legacy of slavery, segregation, systemic oppression
- Community Violence**
Exposure to gun violence, gang activity, drug-related crimes
- Generational Trauma**
Effects of trauma passed down through generations

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TRAUMA IN BLACK MALES

- Significant impact during childhood:
 - ◆ Academic struggles/failure
 - ◆ Juvenile justice involvement
 - ◆ Social/relationship issues
- Higher risk for poor outcomes in adulthood:
 - ◆ PTSD
 - ◆ Depression
 - ◆ Substance abuse
 - ◆ Violence perpetration
 - ◆ Dangerous sexual behaviors

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Incarceration Rates

- US holds record of highest prison population globally
- Extreme prevalence of traumatic experiences in both juvenile detention and prisons
- Rate of imprisonment for Black males is 6 times higher than White men
- Higher trauma experiences=higher risk of criminality

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Depression and PTSD

- 22.4% of Black people reported having a serious mental illness
- Increase in Black people with suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts
- Suicide 3rd leading cause of death for men 25-34
- Black men reported sadness and hopelessness more often than White men
- Looks like anger, aggression, defiance, etc.

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Photo by [Tito la star](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Substance Abuse

- Black men with mental illnesses binge drank and misused illicit drugs more frequently
 - discrimination associated with higher odds of illicit drug use
- Adults admitting to childhood abuse showed an increase in binge drinking
- Between 2015 and 2020 OD rate more than tripled (surpassing rates of White men)
- Rates of seeking SUD treatment equal at first
 - Black men more likely to face delays: have txt terminated by facility; less likely to be prescribed buprenorphine, which significantly reduces risk of OD death (nida.nih.gov)

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WHY NOT MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT?

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01 "Real men don't cry!"

02 "You'll never understand me!"

03 "You don't hear me!"

Non-Help-Seeking Behaviors

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01 "Real men don't cry!"

Non-Help-Seeking Behaviors


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I was told the true definition of a man was to never cry
 Work till you tired (yeah) got to provide (yeah)
 Always be the rock for my fam, protect them by all means
 (and give you the things that you need, baby)
 Our relationship is suffering trying to give you what I never had
 You say I don't know to love you baby
 Well I say show me the way
 I keep my feelings deep inside I
 Shadow them with my pride eye
 I'm trying desperately baby just work with me

Teach me how to love
 Show me the way to surrender my heart, girl I'm so lost
 Teach me how to love
 How I can get my emotions involved
 Teach me, show me how to love
 Show me the way to surrender my heart, girl I'm so lost
 Teach me how to love
 How I can get my emotions involved
 Teach me, how to love

I was always taught to be strong
 Never let them think you care at all
 Let no one get close to me
 Before you and me
 I don't share things with you girl about my past
 That I'd never tell to anyone else (no)
 Just keep it to myself, (yes)
 Girl I know I lack affection and expressing my feelings
 It took me a minute to come and admit this but
 See I'm really try'na (change now)
 Wanna love you better, (show me how)
 I'm tryin desperately baby just work with me

“TEACH ME”
 -Musiq Soulchild



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“People of color, particularly African Americans,
 feel the stigma more keenly. In a race-conscious
 society, some don't want to be perceived as having
 yet another deficit.”

-BEBE MOORE CAMPBELL

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02

“You’ll never understand me!”




Non-Help-Seeking Behaviors

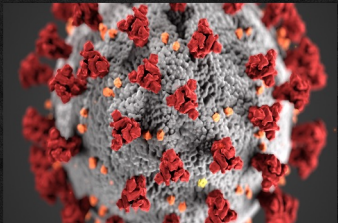
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Tuskegee Experiment

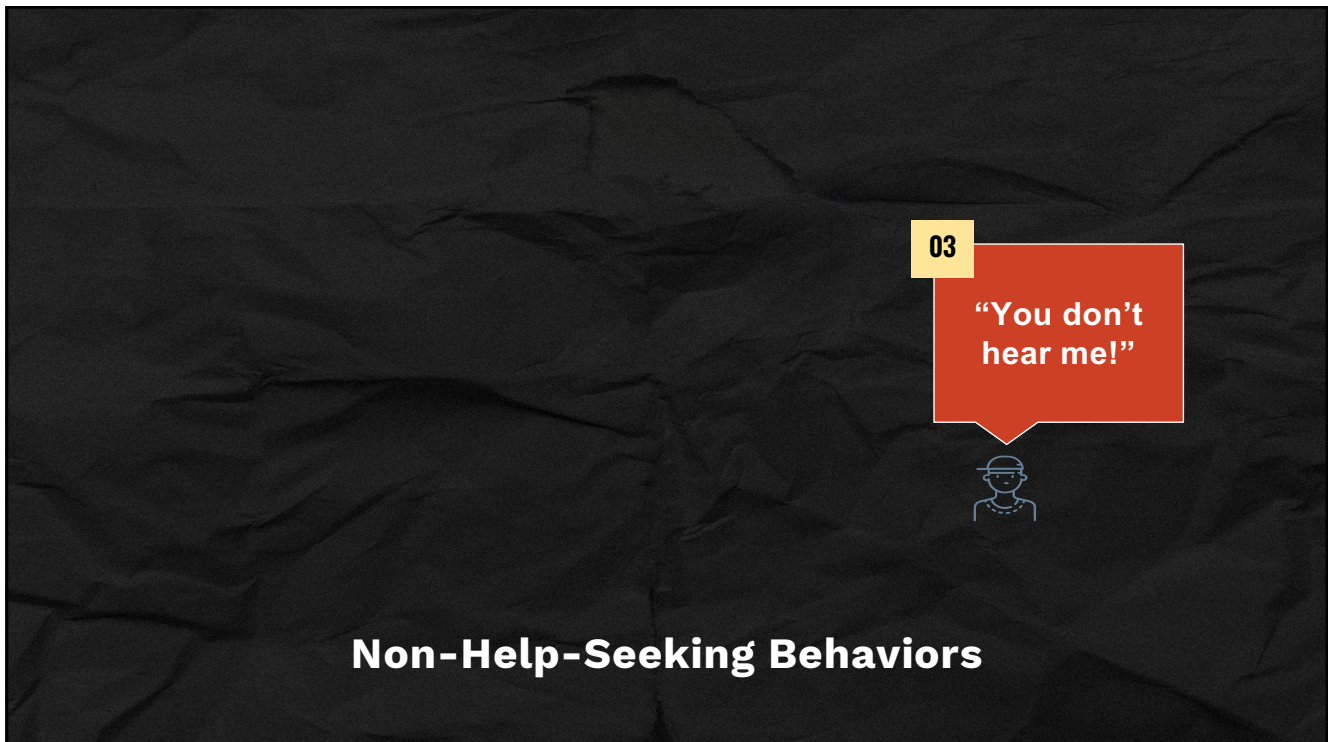


Henrietta Lacks

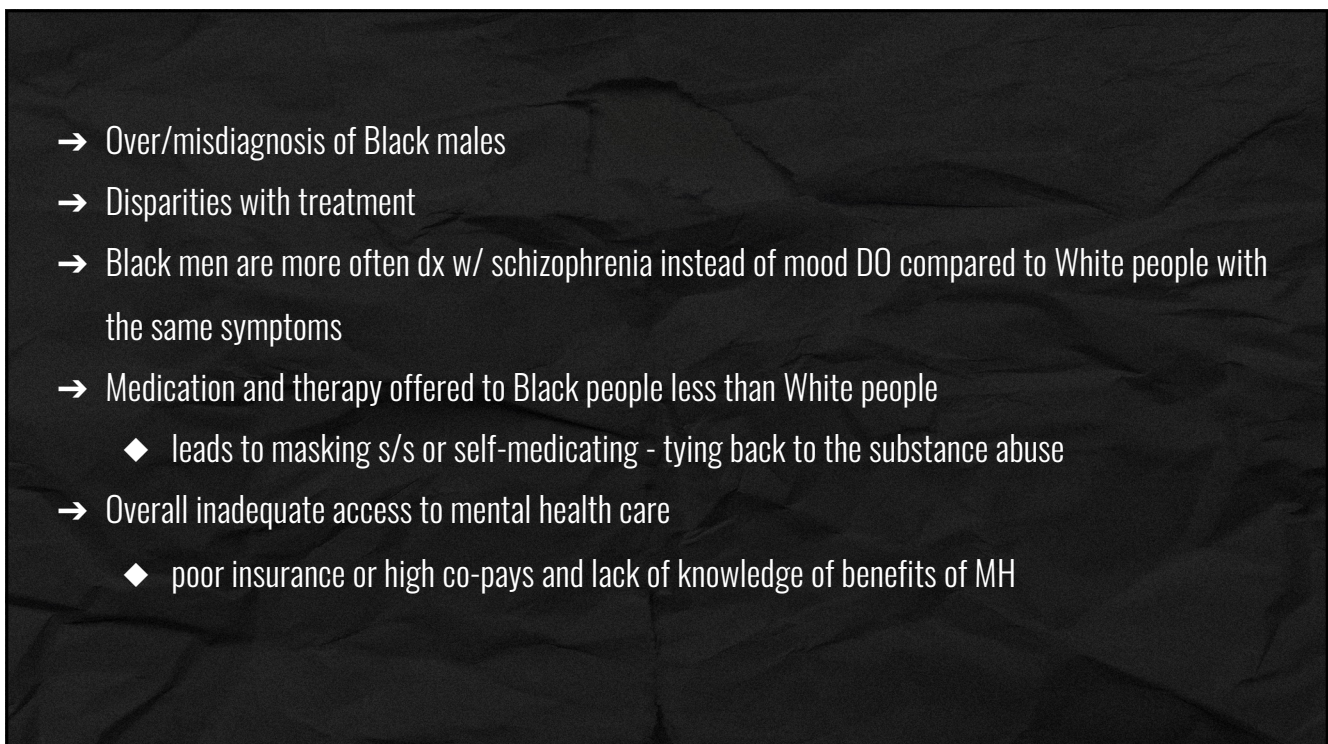


Coronavirus

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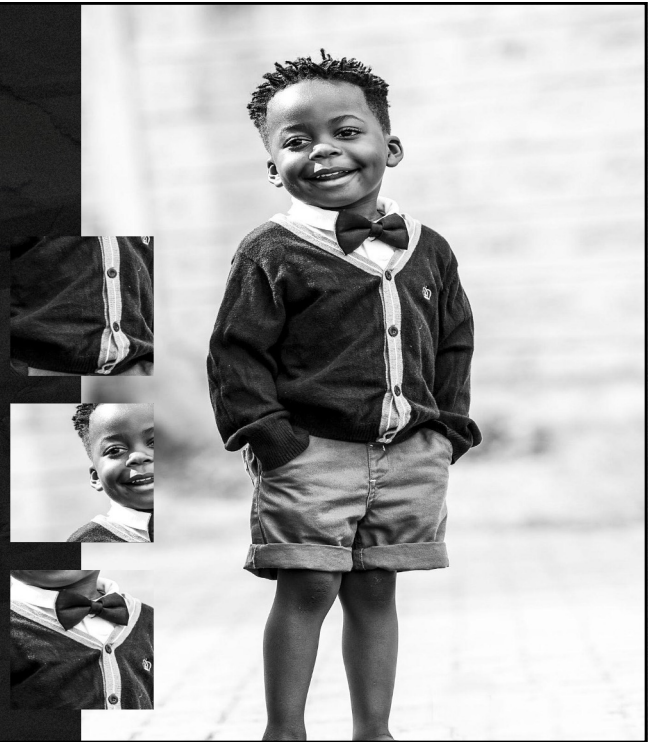
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Implications

- Be intentional about protective factors
 - Healthy practices, familial support, regular school attendance, etc.
- Teach mental wellness at a young age
 - School SEL curriculum: lessons specific to Black males and minorities
- Parent trainings alongside educators
 - s/s of trauma
 - Effects of trauma
 - Training in the community, churches, etc.



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Think Outside the Box

- Consider location
- Meet clients where they are
- Normalize mental health
- Ask them!



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For Providers

Be trauma-Informed: what happened to you?

Systems Theory: what's influencing the behaviors?

Educate and Advocate: use your platform at every opportunity!

Ask questions and listen: what works for one may not work for all.

A.C.E.: to be continued...



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What else?

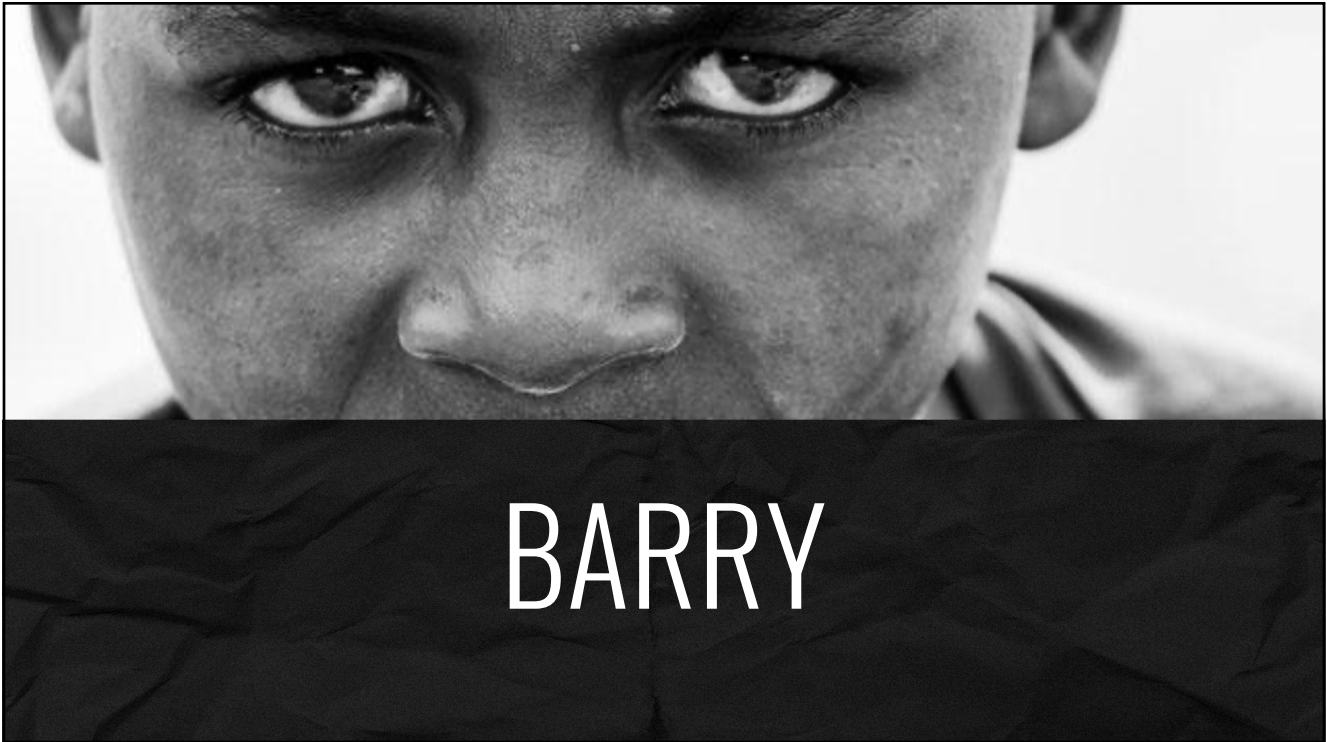
Parents - talk about trauma and mental health! What happens in the family doesn't always need to stay in the family!

Educators - know the signs! If you see something, say something.

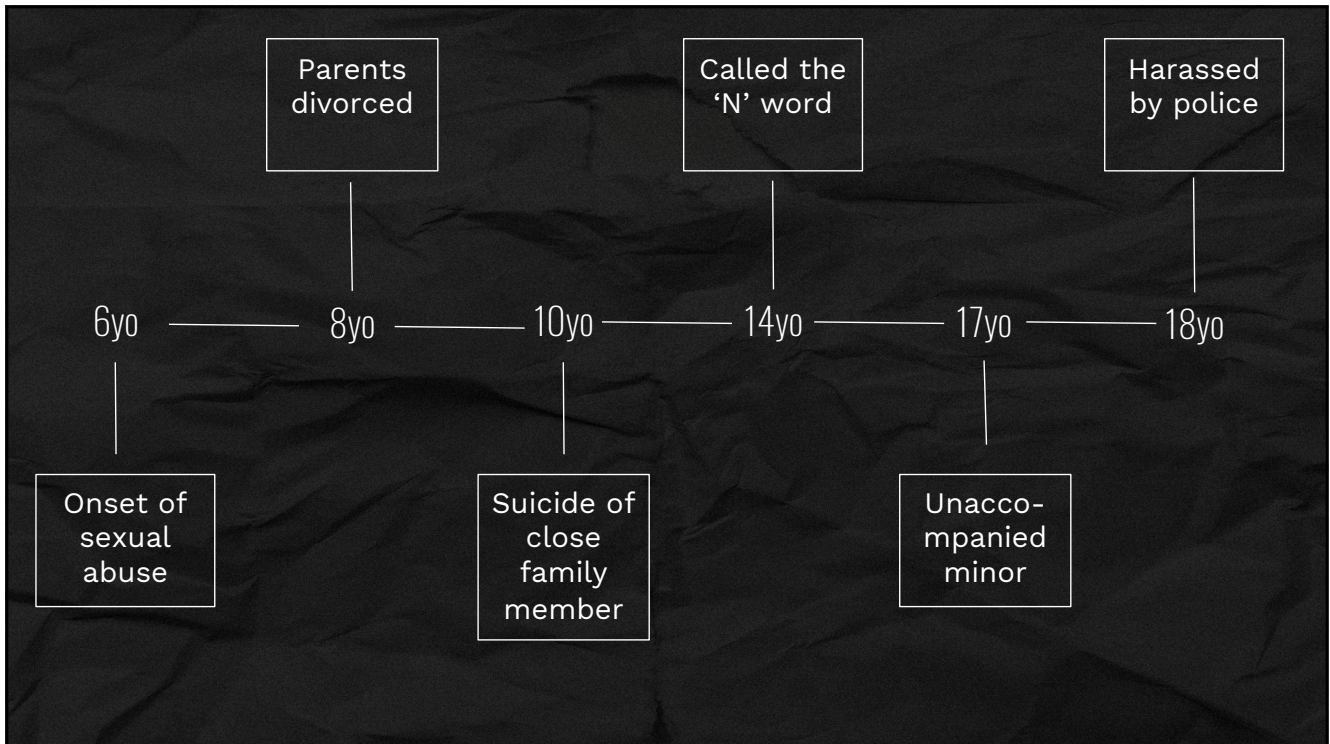
Community - it takes a village to eradicate the stigma of mental health.



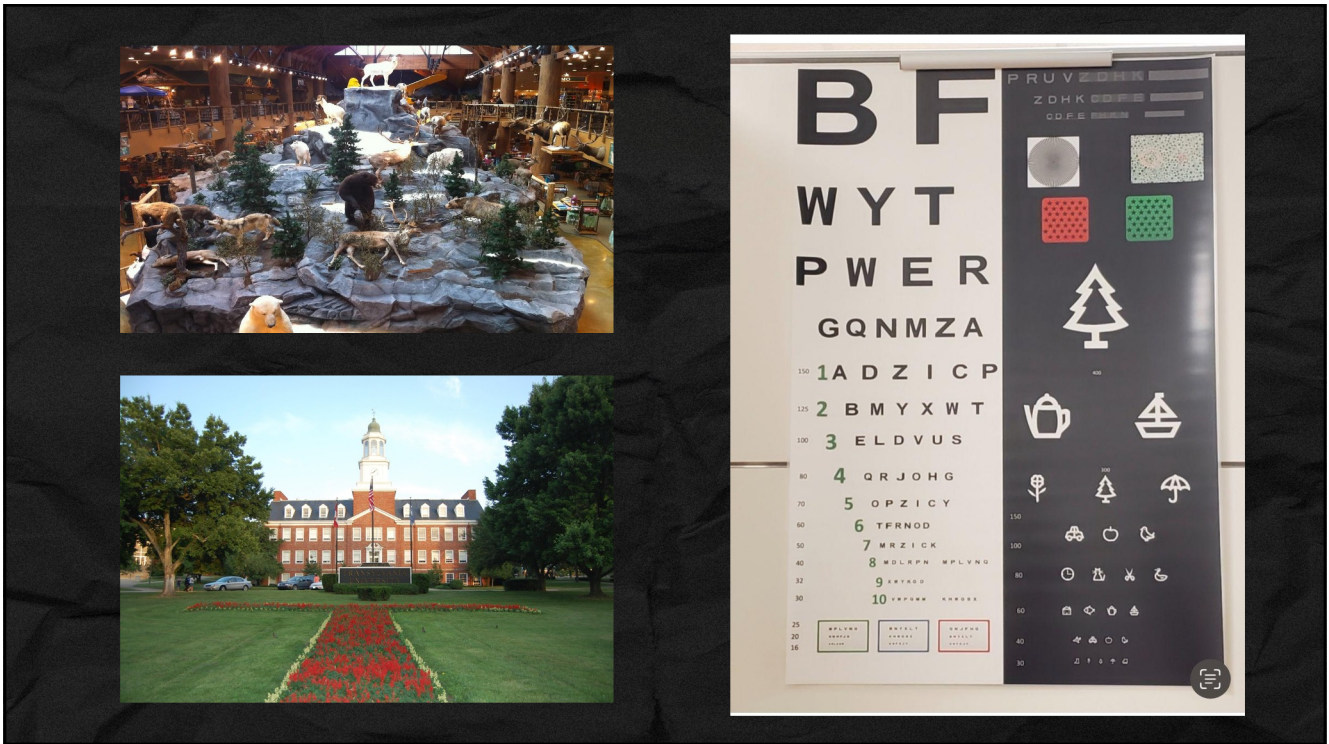
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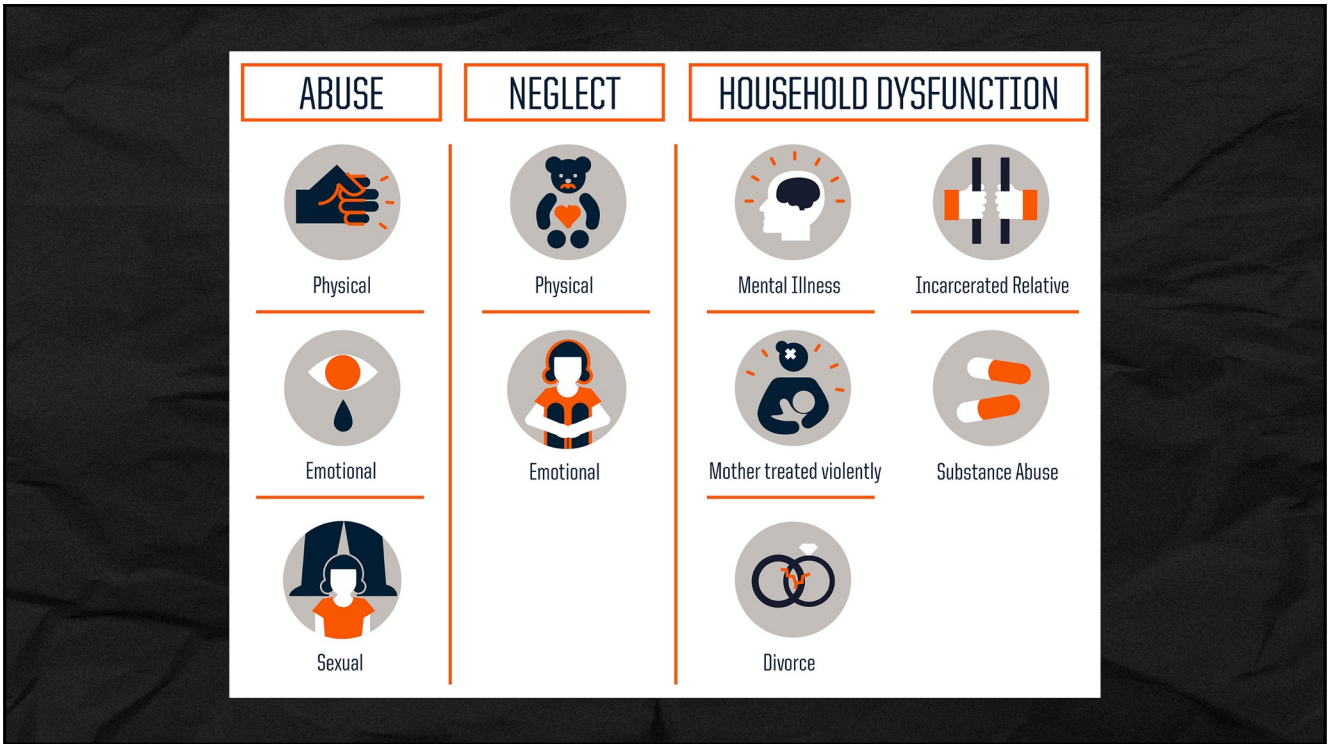
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- **Impact of daily microaggressions**
- **Impact of racial profiling**
- **Impact of negative interactions with police**
- **Fear of driving/living while Black**
- **Fleeing war-torn countries**
- **Threat of being deported**
- **Genocide**
- **What else?**

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CTQ-AA

1. Were you ever called a racial slur...
 To your face with the intent of degrading you or hurting your feelings?
or
 Indirectly, but still aware of the slur being used?
 Yes No

yes enter 1 _____

2. Did you ever have a negative experience with the police...
 While being pulled over with no probable cause?
or
 And excessive force was used to detain you or a family member?
 Yes No

If yes enter 1 _____

3. Has anyone made comments to you that could be considered microaggressions?
 Yes No

If yes enter 1 _____

4. Have you ever felt stressed from repeatedly seeing...
 Racially traumatic events in the media?
or
 Family members or friends being killed or targeted for being Black?
 Yes No

If yes enter 1 _____

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Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____ Add this to your original ACE Score





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Scan here







<https://bit.ly/culturaltraumaquestionnaire>

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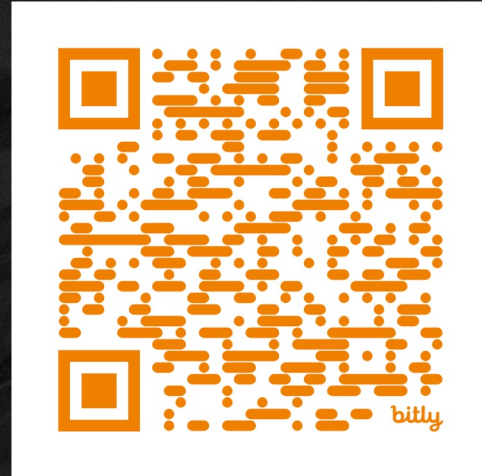
Smith High School		Student Trauma Intervention Plan		
		Use this document to assist in formulating your treatment plan for students impacted by trauma.		
		Team Member: Dr. Shericka Smith		
	Protective Factors	Potential ACEs	Cultural Considerations	Next Steps
 Barry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive role model (coach) - involved in sports - accepted into college - regular attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sexual/emotional abuse - divorce - death of a loved one - neglect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - racial profiling - microaggressions - being called racial slurs - neg. interactions with police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider male therapist - small groups - specific trauma intervention (TARGET, CBITS, TF-CBT) - adjust meeting location
 Darrel				
 Alexis				
 Aries				

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		Student Trauma Intervention Plan		
		Use this document to assist in formulating your treatment plan for students impacted by trauma.		
		Team Member:		
	Protective Factors	Potential ACEs	Cultural Considerations	Next Steps
				
				
				
				

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Scan here



<https://bit.ly/40wN5em>

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Share Your Plan

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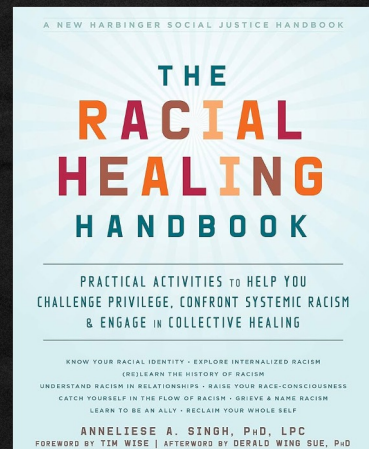
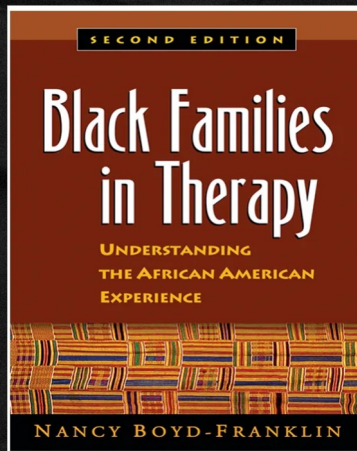
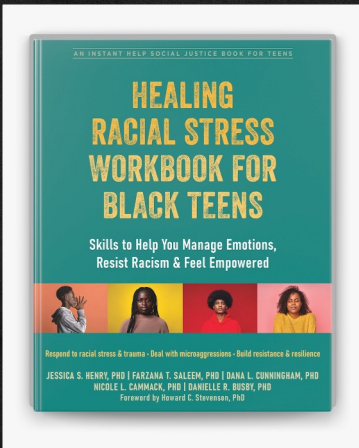
“The goal of therapy should never be to help people adjust to oppression.”

*mmcounselingcenter.com
@carmencool*



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Resources to consider...



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RESOURCES

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (2015). Racial and ethnic disparities in men's use of mental health treatments. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db206.htm>

DCP Entertainment. Kier Gaines talks Black men in therapy, fatherhood, and a** whippins. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/q85nTorqowl>

Healing Touch. Saraarielwong.com

Teach Me (2000). Musiq Soulchild

Loudermilk, Loudermilk, K., Obenauer, J., & Quinn, M. A. (2018). Impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on adult alcohol consumption behaviors. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 86,368–374. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.08.006>

The Little Boy Inside (How trauma affects Black men)

SAMHSA. 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): African Americans. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt23247/2_AfricanAmerican_2020_01_14_508.pdf

Volkow, N. (2024). Older Black men are disproportionately affected by the overdose crisis. National Institute on Drug Abuse. <https://nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2024/08/older-black-men-are-disproportionately-affected-by-overdose-crisis>