

Senior Mental Health and Wellness

JULY IS
National Minority Mental
Health Awareness Month

July is National Minority Mental Health Month



Meet your GAST Team



Serena Turpin, RN Team
Lead
910-316-5093



M. Susan Baggett, BA,
QMHP
910-316-5303

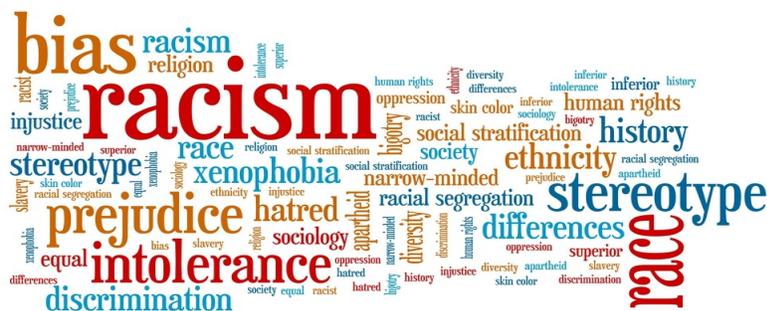
Mental health conditions do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color or sexual identity. Anyone can go through the challenges of mental illness no matter what their background. That being said, background and identity can make access to mental health treatment much harder. National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month was established in 2008 to change all that.

The statistics are sobering. One in five Americans is affected by mental health conditions. However, a pervasive stigma still remains that can be toxic to their mental health due to living in an environment of shame, fear and silence. This environment oftentimes prevents people from seeking the help and treatment they need to live fulfilling lives.

Each year millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental health condition. As the U.S. population continues to grow and become more diverse, it is projected that by 2044, more than half of Americans will belong to a minority group, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

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Mental Health and Diverse Populations

Studies show that ethnic and racial minorities experience a high burden of disability resulting from mental disorders. Here are some interesting statistics:



- Rates of depression may be lower in African Americans and Hispanics than in whites but depression is more persistent in those ethnicities.
- Those who are comprised of two or more races are most likely to have mental illness than any other racial or ethnic group.
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives have higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and alcohol addiction than any other ethnic or racial group.
- White Americans are more likely to commit suicide than people of other ethnic and racial groups.
- Those from minority groups are less likely to seek out and receive mental health care.
- LGBTQ individuals are nearly three times more likely than others to experience a mental health condition such as depression or anxiety disorder. A fear of coming out to others and being discriminated against for sexual orientation or gender identity can lead to depression, PTSD, suicidal thoughts and substance abuse.

“Today I refuse to stress myself out over things I can't control and change.”



Barriers to Care

There are many factors that affect access to treatment by members of diverse ethnic and racial groups. Those factors can include:

- Lack of insurance or inadequate insurance
- Mental illness stigma, which is higher among minority populations
- Lack of diversity in available mental health care providers
- Lack of culturally-competent providers
- Language barriers
- Lack of trust in healthcare system
- Inadequate support for mental health services within safety-net settings



Racism Leads to Racial Trauma, Similar to PTSD

In the past few weeks, minority communities have been repeatedly reminded of the risks involved when they interact with police, been repeatedly exposed to videos men and women being murdered, and seen a military response to communities protesting these abuses. These experiences are piled onto the daily experiences of direct, indirect and systemic racism. The cumulative effect of these experiences can have a serious damaging impact to the mental and physical health of Black people. Psychologists describe this impact as racial trauma.

Psychologists state people who experience race-based stress and trauma frequently have similar experiences to people who have PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Distress can include flashbacks, hypervigilance, nightmares, heart palpitations, poor sleep, and overall heightened anxiety. But where PTSD can be caused by a single event, racial stress is ongoing, pervasive, generationally transmitted, and affects both individuals and collective communities. Thus, beyond PTSD symptoms, racial trauma has enduring and retriggered cognitive, emotional, and somatic consequences.

For example, seeing repeated videos of police killing people who look like you causes racial trauma. Hearing people in the community more concerned about property than life of a person causes racial trauma. The cumulation of hundreds of well-meaning, seemingly innocuous comments about a minority group's appearance, language, and emotions causes racial trauma. Exposure to repeated stressors can lead to long-term increases in stress hormones in the body, which exacerbate mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. It is associated with a host of negative health outcomes, such as high blood pressure and increased risk of cardiovascular events.



"We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race." -

Kofi Annan



Addressing Racism Requires Self-Care

Fighting racism is not an overnight job. While we are collectively engrossed in the fight against injustice, it's important to not forget about your own personal well-being while supporting the cause.

Look after yourself first. Here's how:

- Talk about your feelings and offload emotional baggage.
- Take regular breaks from social media.
- Take time to reflect, meditate and journal.
- Keep active throughout the day and eat well.
- Watch light-hearted shows/movies and take your mind off the news.
- Ask for help when you need it — vulnerability is not a weakness.

Support others by listening:

- Actively listen to the experiences that the person may face.
- Employ non-judgmental listening skills and do not engage in racial escalation while doing so.
- Discuss racism even if it's awkward for you. It's a privilege to learn about racism, rather than experience it on a daily basis.
- Ask questions and engage in the conversation.



Therapeutic Alternatives, Inc.
Geriatric Adult Specialty Team



therapeutic alternatives, inc.
people • resources • outcomes

Serena Turpin, RN, CCM; Team Lead
910-316-5093

M. Susan Baggett, BA, QMHP
910-316-5303
mary.baggett@mytahome.com

The GAST teams provide education and discussions about the needs of older adults with mental illness to community agencies such as local NAMI organizations, senior centers, nutrition sites supported by local Area Agencies on Aging, health departments, churches and other invested community groups.



All GAST trainings are supported by the N.C. Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR).

The trainings provided by GAST staff are **free** of charge to facilities and community agencies.

GAST News



COMMUNITY EDUCATION EVENTS THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVES

IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY THERAPEUTIC ALTERNATIVES IS OFFERING A WEBINAR SERIES ON OLDER ADULTS

TRAININGS WILL BE PRESENTED VIA WEBINAR

"Bipolar Disorder" - The Basics"

Serena Turpin, RN, CCM & Susan Baggett, BA QMHP

July 23 ,2020: 10:00 - 11:00pm

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7313746147452638988>

July 23, 2020: 3:00 - 4:00 pm

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7983143120093866252>

(To register—click the wen link or copy and paste in address bar)

For questions or additional information please contact:

Brooke Mickelson via email at bmickelson@eastpointe.net

If you need assistance with registration please contact training@eastpointe.net