

Let's Talk: Cultural Differences

Presenter – Adrienne Davis, Communications Specialist

Hi, I'm Adrienne Davis and I'm a communications specialist. Let's talk about cultural stigmas around mental health. Mental health struggles affects each individual differently and the stigmas around mental health are also perceived in many ways among different cultures across the world. In some cultures, oftentimes those who are struggling with mental health prefer to struggle quietly instead of seeking help out of fear that they may be judged or deemed as weak.

This then causes their struggles to be brushed under the rug and their mental health to be overlooked. Growing up in a strict Caribbean household, it was oftentimes difficult for me to express my emotions or speak openly about my struggles with anxiety out of fear of judgment. Because of my awareness of how my culture tends to describe mental health, as I grew up, I realized that this judgement was due to a lack of knowledge within my culture.

If you're struggling with any sort of stigma around mental health on either side based on your culture, these tips just might help.

Be open to conversation

First, be open to the conversation. In a lot of cultures like my own, these conversations just aren't had. This is usually because there's a huge sense of feeling uncomfortable discussing what's going on. This may be because of the fear of feeling judged, being laughed at, or being misunderstood. When we can be understanding of what we may not understand, it sets the tone for a more smooth and open conversation around mental health. A lot of cultural behavior is passed down. Help be the change for future generations to come.

Become aware

The second tip, become aware. The perception of mental health within a certain culture won't change until you act to change it. Learn about certain mental health struggles that individuals may face. Spread awareness among the culture in order to educate those who may not have the resources to educate themselves. A lot of times we may just brush things off because of lack of information and many cultures. Mental health may not have been highlighted enough, and the people within that culture weren't educated. Just like my own. If there are more efforts made to inform, individuals may feel more comfortable with coming out and speaking on their own struggles. It will also help with reducing the stigma. Once I

educated myself on what was going on with me, I felt comfortable enough to discuss it and educate my parents and other individuals within my culture to inform them that, hey, this is a real thing.

Be respectful and supportive

And lastly, be respectful and supportive. Being respectful with your words can definitely help. Using terms such as crazy or weak are hurtful. Words are very powerful, and we also need to remember that people are not defined by their mental health conditions. Be empathetic, respectful, and supportive, even if you may not fully understand someone else's mental health struggle. Break through those cultural barriers and treat everyone with respect. As someone who experiences anxiety, before I educated myself and knew exactly what it was I didn't quite understand. And growing up within the culture that I did, I wasn't able to seek the necessary help until I was able to 100% educate myself on the subject and realize that there are resources that I could have used in order to get assistance.

I also learned to not be negative towards those in my culture and realize that is just a lack of understanding due to a lack of knowledge that was provided to them around the subject. Mental health is a serious topic and your mental health matters. Stay safe, be kind, treat everyone well. And remember, just because you may not understand doesn't mean it's not important.

Resources For Living

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only. Information is not a substitute for professional health care and is not meant to replace the advice of health care professionals. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.

©2022 Resources For Living | 1059501-01-01-RFL (4/22)