

Mental health awareness: Cultural differences

I'm a person, not a statistic

Hi, my name is Sable and today I'll be talking, just briefly, about my journey through mental health as a African-American woman.

My mental health journey began my senior of college when I was navigating severe anxiety, depression and I eventually began to develop an eating disorder. I walked into my student health services building for the first time and I had no prior knowledge or any expectations about what it meant to seek mental health treatment. I felt like a fish out of water and I simply didn't belong. I didn't know if that was a space that I could claim and that I could partake in.

And so I began to see my therapist there for about two weeks and was eventually referred out to my now-therapist, who I've been seeing for about 10 or so years. We openly and honestly have candid conversations about what it means to be a black woman in this space. A lot of it is, is there relatability? Can you understand what it means for me to share my issues, my cultural conditioning? Mental health in my family just wasn't talked about and if it was you simply needed to pray about it.

I encourage anyone who is wanting to seek therapeutic support or mental health support within the African-American community to really tap into your surroundings or your resources. I know that a lot of mental health disparities within the African-American community are due to lack of resources — be it financial, or referrals. The city I am in does offer pro bono services and then they do offer reduced cost mental health services. There are also specific groups that are targeted to African-American woman and then at the African-American community; males as well. And those resources might refer you, or can refer you to mental health professionals that are of similar cultural background, similar experiences that you feel safe with and that you feel that you belong.

You're not alone. We're here for you.

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