

July is BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

Understanding traumas and triggers and setting boundaries for healthy relationships

Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are at risk of experiencing unique trauma due to mental and emotional injury from a variety of causes.

If you have experienced such trauma, you may find that your relationships are impacted. Consider these strategies to protect and manage your closest relationships and all that are important to you.

Recognize triggers

We can be triggered by and experience racism through direct hateful attacks, witnessing racial violence and inequities, bias, and the transfer of traumas passed down from previous generations.

The impacts of racism can go beyond our own emotional pain and psychological distress to impact our relationships. When we feel triggered, it's important to:

- ☐ **Identify your emotions**—Are we feeling surprise, fear, sadness, disgust, anger? It can be helpful to name to our emotions so we can use our knowledge about how to deal with them and seek help if necessary.
- ☐ **Recognize the validity of your emotions**—We are right to feel the way we do, and we don't need to waste our energy questioning that. It's important to take the time to understand how we are feeling.
- ☐ **Manage your emotions**—When we know what we are feeling, we are in a better place to be in control of how to approach and react to people and situations. This can have beneficial impacts for our relationships.

Set boundaries

With family members and friends, co-workers and even strangers, we must feel safe to be ourselves and feel respected. Setting and sticking to personal boundaries can help. Here's how you can do it:

- ☐ **Prioritize needs**—Take the time to think through where you stand, what you can and cannot tolerate, and what makes you feel happy or uncomfortable.
- ☐ **Anticipate resistance**—Expect that others may not easily understand your boundaries, especially if they have different backgrounds or personalities.
- ☐ **Communicate boundaries**—Clearly and directly let others know of your boundaries and reiterate them if you feel they are being overstepped.
- ☐ **Distance yourself if necessary**—If you feel disrespected or have your boundaries crossed repeatedly, it may be time to cut off further interactions to protect your emotional wellbeing.

Practice self-care

We are our own best advocates. It's vitally important that we take time to do the things that make us happy, keep us healthy and give us an outlet from negativity. Our wellbeing will improve and our relationships will also benefit. Try these activities:

- ☐ **Try a delicious new recipe**—Taking time to enjoy cooking or baking can be relaxing and fruitful when it's time to eat!
- ☐ **Enjoy quiet time to rest or nap**—Sometimes it can be hard to take a break. Take the opportunities as they arise and enjoy every moment!
- ☐ **Read a book or start a hobby**—Keep your mind active and engaged in activities that bring you joy.
- ☐ **Catch up for a visit or phone call with a loved one**—Connecting with others can increase your sense of safety, belonging and security.
- ☐ **Volunteer**—Giving of yourself to help others can improve your confidence, self-esteem and life satisfaction.
- ☐ **Get outside for fresh air and exercise**—Sunshine and nature have been proven to boost mood.

Visit your member website for more information.