



July is

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Dear Neighbor,

Mental illness can affect anyone regardless of race, color, gender, sexuality, or ability. However, an individual's particular background can make access to mental health treatment much more difficult. Established in 2008 and celebrated every July, **National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month** promotes local, regional, and national initiatives that encourage Americans like you to become informed about mental illness and to take action to mitigate its effects and the broader health disparities that exist.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, mental illness affects one in five adults and one in 10 children in America. Mental illness is a leading cause of disability, yet nearly two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment. As reported by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, minorities often are less likely to receive diagnosis and treatment for mental illness, have less access to and availability of mental health services, and receive poorer quality mental health care.

This July, we encourage you to reflect on the lives of those touched by mental illness and to tackle its ongoing challenges, including the lack of quality and affordable health care coverage and the cultural stigma surrounding mental illness.

I wish you a Happy National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month! Thank you for your anticipated efforts in helping us spread the word through awareness, support, and advocacy.

Yours in Service,


Kevin Parker

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Introduction

(Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Mental Health Institute)

As the United States becomes more diverse culturally and ethnically, the need for a clear awareness of minority mental health became evidently urgent. In May of 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives announced that July is the National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health does not discriminate based on race or culture, yet different racial and cultural groups experience mental illnesses differently. Each year, millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental health condition. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, this affects 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 10 children in America. Despite its extensiveness, two-thirds of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment, while minority, racial and ethnic groups in America are even less likely to get help.

Among African Americans, common mental health disorders include major depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), suicide, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Moreover, being homeless and exposed to violence increases the risk of the development of mental health conditions among African Americans. Unfortunately, African Americans make up 40% of the homeless population in America, and African American children are more likely to be exposed to violence than children from other ethnic backgrounds.

Why mental health?

(Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness)

A lack of understanding and stigma surrounding mental illness is a contributing factor of the lack of treatment among African-American communities. Mental illness **is not** a sign of personal weakness **nor is it** some sort of punishment from God. Mental illness often goes beyond what one could control and is often related to the biological structure or psychological development of the brain. A person's mental health is often shaped by his or her childhood experience, exposure to trauma, relationships, lifestyle, etc. African Americans may be reluctant to discuss mental health issues and seek treatment due to shame and stigma associated with such conditions. However, this July, we urge you and your families to openly encourage your neighbors and all members of your community to have dialogues and conversations about your and their emotional state. Together, we can #ACT4MENTALHEALTH and avoid the terrible tragedies associated with mental illness.

Together, we can cure the stigma.



NYC WELL

(source: NYC Department of Health)



One of the most convenient and easiest way to discuss mental health issues, or simply just to find someone to talk to and de-stress, share your pain, and feel less lonely, is the NYC WELL service. It is

a free hotline for anyone to call at any time 24/7. NYC WELL is staffed by trained counselors who can share your daily burden, and they even accept calls from deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals using video relay services. Interpreters are available for more than 200 languages. Even if you are asking on behalf of someone else, or just want to call someone to talk to about your long day, they will gladly take your call.

With NYC WELL, you can receive suicide prevention and crisis counseling, peer support and short-term counseling via telephone, text, and web, assistance scheduling appointments, or accessing other mental health services, and follow-up calls to check that you have connected to health-care providers and whether it is working for you. Every service NYC WELL provides is free and completely confidential. Staff members are kind, patient, and well trained to listen and help. This July, let's encourage more people who are silently suffering from stress, depression, anxiety, or any other mental health issues to call 1-888-NYC-WELL or text "WELL" to 65173. One can even chat online at nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/.

Symptoms of Mental Illness

Cure
Stigma.

There are so many different symptoms of mental illness, yet the most common symptoms are listed below:

Depression:

- Little interest or pleasure in things
- Feeling down or hopeless
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Fatigue
- Appetite problems
- Thinking that you are a failure or are letting people down
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling slowed down or speeded up
- Unexplained physical problems that won't go away (headaches, stomachaches, chronic pain)
- Thoughts about dying or hurting yourself

ADHD among children:

- Get distracted easily and forget things often
- Switch too quickly from one activity to the next
- Have trouble with directions
- Daydream too much
- Have trouble finishing tasks like homework or chores
- Lose toys, books, and school supplies often
- Fidget and squirm a lot
- Talk nonstop and interrupt people
- Run around a lot
- Touch and play with everything they see
- Be very impatient
- Blurt out inappropriate comments



(Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, American Psychiatric Association, NYC Department of Health)

PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder):

- Flashbacks: reliving trauma over and over, including physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweating
- Bad dreams
- Frightening thoughts
- Staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the traumatic experience
- Avoiding thoughts or feelings related to the traumatic event
- Being easily startled
- Feeling tense
- Having difficulty sleeping
- Having angry outbursts
- Distorted feelings like guilt or blame
- Negative thoughts about oneself or the world
- Loss of interest in enjoyable activities

These are the symptoms for the three most common mental illness among African Americans. However, mental illnesses come in all different forms and may not be diagnosed easily. Here are some general symptoms of mental suffering that may apply to any kind of mental illnesses:

- **Withdrawal:** Recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in others
- **Drop in functioning:** An unusual drop in functioning at school or at work
- **Problems thinking:** Problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain
- **Increased sensitivity:** Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells, or touch
- **Apathy:** Loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity
- **Feeling disconnected:** A vague feeling of being disconnected from oneself
- **Illogical thinking:** Unusual or exaggerated beliefs about personal powers to understand meanings or influence events
- **Mood changes:** Rapid or dramatic shifts in feelings

One or two of these symptoms cannot predict a mental illness. However, if a person is experiencing several at one time and the symptoms are causing serious problems in his or her ability to work, study, or function normally daily, he or she should see a mental health professional. If you yourself or someone you know who is experiencing symptoms described above, please consult with a healthcare professional or a mental health facility immediately.



Senator Kevin Parker
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Important Information from Senator Kevin Parker

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July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

If you or your loved ones need assistance right now, you can call or visit any of the following facilities:



Kingsboro Psychiatric Center
681 Clarkson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11203
(917) 565-8294

Kings County Hospital NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County
451 Clarkson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11203
(718) 245-3131

SUNY Downstate Medical Center Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Downstate Mental Health Associates (DMHA)
450 Clarkson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11203
(718) 270-8110

New York Methodist Hospital Psychiatry and Mental Health Services
506 Sixth Street
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 780-3771

The Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center Department of Psychiatry & Mental Health Services
One Brookdale Plaza, Suite 346 CHC
Brooklyn, NY 11212
(718) 240-6330

Community Counseling & Mediation (CCM)
Main Office Mental Health Clinic and Headquarters
25 Elm Place, Second Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 802-0666

CCM Classon Mental Health Clinic & Multi-Service Center
(Including Youth Programs)
810 Classon Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11238
(718) 230-5100

NYU Langone Hospital – Brooklyn
150 55th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11220
(718) 630-7000

