

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BLACK PEOPLE

A guide for black
students



Keele
UNIVERSITY





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start to
SUCCESS
YOUNGmINDS
fighting for young people's mental health






In the UK, Black British people are more likely to encounter inpatient mental health services, be diagnosed with psychosis, and to be detained under the Mental Health Act than white people – these are things we need to talk about.

RACISM IS DAMAGING TO MENTAL HEALTH

With the recent Black Lives Matter protests occurring across the world, you might be feeling under tremendous pressure to share your voice. You might also feel like you are increasingly under attack as people that share your skin colour fight for social justice.

From experiencing years of microaggressions, to an unjust justice system and the impact of economic inequalities, we know that you may be feeling defeated. You might feel as if anything you say or do will have very little effect on the outcome of this situation.

All of these experiences can increase the risk of developing mental health issues.



Things that can influence Black mental health...

Racism and discrimination

Black people often experience racism in their lives, ranging from casual slights to explicit hurtful comments and verbal or physical aggression. Experiencing racism can be very stressful and have a negative effect on overall health and mental health.

Social and economic inequalities

Black communities are also often faced with disadvantages in society. They are more likely to experience poverty, have poorer educational outcomes, higher unemployment, and contact with the criminal justice system, and may face challenges accessing or receiving appropriate professional services.

Mental health stigma

Different cultures understand and talk about mental health in different ways. In many Black communities, mental health problems are often stigmatized and can be seen in a negative light. This can discourage people within the community from talking about their mental health and may be a barrier to engagement with health services.

Criminal justice system

There is growing concern over unmet mental health needs among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals within the criminal justice system, particularly in the youth justice system. One 2016 report on the youth justice system in England and Wales found over 40% of children are from BAME backgrounds, and more than one third have a diagnosed mental health problem.

Being treated differently or unfairly due to race, skin colour or ethnicity negatively affects mental health

You might spend a lot of time wondering whether you have been badly or unfairly treated because of your skin colour, race or ethnicity, or for some other reason, and it's not always totally clear. This might make you feel confused or even foolish for talking about your experiences, especially if the people you are talking to have never had to ask themselves these sorts of questions.

Sometimes, even if you are convinced you have experienced racist treatment, people around you might try to tell us you've got it wrong or you're being too dramatic. This must feel very lonely and isolating.

It's also valid if you feel that experiencing racism 'indirectly' has an effect on your mental health. Sometimes the things going on around us, to people who look just like us, can feel like they have happened to us and make us feel personally attacked, helpless, or like our lives don't matter.

If racism is affecting your mental health, there are steps you can take to get the help and support you deserve. We want you to know that you don't have to go through it alone.

WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE MY MENTAL HEALTH?

1

Speak to someone you trust.

Talking about how you feel can often be the first step to getting help and finding support. It might feel difficult to talk about how you are feeling or to revisit personal experiences of racism. Take your time and only share what you want to.

2

Speak to your GP.

Especially if you are experiencing flashbacks or intrusive thoughts, have a continuously low mood, depression or low self-esteem, or are feeling numb or empty inside. We also encourage you to speak to your GP if you are experiencing changes to your sleeping or eating habits, changes to your mood and behaviour that feel out of the ordinary, or you're feeling worried or are anxious a lot of the time.

3

Learn your rights and how to report abuse.

This can help you feel empowered and remind you that what you are experiencing is not okay and no one should believe that it is.



4

Find supportive groups and communities.

It can be very hard to explain how you feel to a person that has not experienced racism, whether directly or indirectly. Online communities can be a way to find like-minded people with similar experiences and shared interests that you can talk to, have a safe space to be heard and remember that you are not alone.

5

Join a movement to create change.

There are many anti-racist movements and organisations who are fighting for change in society. Being part of a larger movement can help you feel empowered, valued and give you a sense of hope that change is possible. Make sure to take time out to rest and look after yourself if you are regularly involved in activism.

6

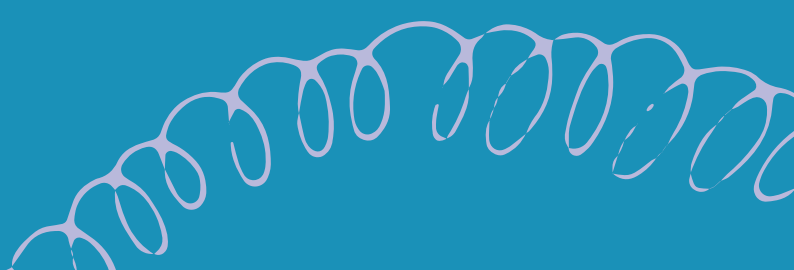
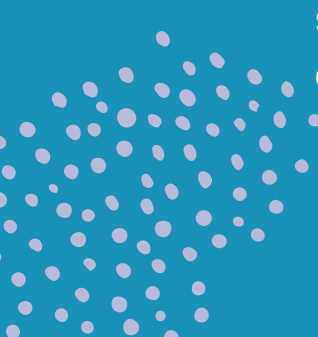
Remember it is not your responsibility to fix racism.

Do not put pressure on yourself – this is a problem you cannot solve on your own. The people around you all have a responsibility to make changes to their behaviour and to uphold the rights of Black people.

7

Clean your social media feed.

What we see online can have a negative impact on our mental health, but remember you can have control over what you see on your social media. Try unfollowing or blocking accounts and muting words that upset you. All social media channels have ways you can report abusive behaviour.



A guest blogger for Young Minds, Wes, has shared some other tips that you might find helpful:

- If you need to, do not be afraid to go on a social media detox – your mental health is important.
- If you want to post something but are feeling under pressure, you could keep it simple and express how you feel in one or two sentences. A clear and simple message from the heart might feel better than reposting everything you see.
- Like the first point, if you feel you need it, take time for some self-care. Doing something for yourself – e.g. reading a book, playing a video game, watching some TV – is really important.

Blogs on racism and mental health

Find more blogs written by young people on racism and mental health:

- [Racism and my mental health](#) – "Nobody has any right to discriminate against you based on your race or ethnicity. Ever." Activist, Luke, 15, shares how his experience of racism has affected his mental health.
- [Black mental health matters](#) – Everybody deserves mental health support when they need it. Guest blogger for Young Minds, Wes, shares why it's important that we talk about Black mental health.
- [How racism impacts my mental health](#) – Sian, 19, shares how racism affects her mental health, and what helps her cope.

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

On Campus

- Student Services
- Counselling and Mental Health
- Peer Supporters
- Chaplaincy Team
- KeeleSU ASK
- Out of Hours support is also available from our Resident Advisors, Security team and Out of Hours Support Officers.

Digital/Online

- Togetherall (formally Big White Wall)
- Take a look at some free apps that can help you manage your own wellbeing
- For text based mental health support, reach out to Shout

Locally

- Samaritans of Stoke or Newcastle
- North Staffordshire Wellbeing Team
- Visit your GP or call 111

Reporting a Hate Crime

Any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone because of their race or ethnicity is a 'hate crime'. Anybody can report a hate crime – whether they are the victim, someone who witnessed the crime, or someone the victim has told about the crime or incident.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER PLACES YOU CAN REPORT HATE CRIME:

To Stop Hate UK: If you don't want to tell the police, you can call Stop Hate UK on 0800 138 1625. Stop Hate UK is one of the leading national organisations working to challenge all forms of hate crime and discrimination. They can provide independent, confidential and accessible reporting and support for victims, witnesses and third parties. Keele University has partnered up with Stop Hate to ensure that any Keele student can have 24 hour support for any hate incidents or crimes, even if it didn't occur on campus.

To the University: Please contact the Student Services Centre to report incidents of bullying and hate crime and receive advice and support about your options from an adviser. Contact them on student.services@keele.ac.uk or 01782 734481.

To the Students' Union, ASK: ASK provides independent, confidential and accessible advice and support to Keele students. Contact them on su.ask@keele.ac.uk.

To Challenge North Staffs: You could also report Hate Crime to an organisation like Challenge North Staffs which aims to promote the reporting of Hate Crime in the North Staffordshire area. You can report an incident by completing the form available on their website, or you can contact them by texting 'Hate' + your message to 07537414477 or telephoning 0330 1111 999. You can also text or call Challenge North Staffs if you require information or advice.

Other helpful resources...

- Young Minds – leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges. We're here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – find out more about your rights under the Equality Act 2010 and how it protects different characteristics such as gender, race and sexuality.
- Black Minds Matter – connects black individuals and families with free professional mental health services across the UK.
- BBC Bitesize – Advice from an expert on looking after your mental health if you have been affected by racism.
- Local Mind – a useful way of finding out what's available in your area such as specific BAME groups
- Black Thrive – an organisation that aims to end the stigma associated with mental health
- Sharing Voices – a charity in Bradford that aims to reduce mental health and related inequalities for BAME communities
- Being Black, Going Crazy? A BBC documentary following the journey of blogger and radio presenter Keith Dube wants to find out why Britain's black community is facing this mental health crisis.
- Rachel Ricketts: Racism, Spirituality & Wellness – A curated list of racial justice minded resources to support wellness