

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BLACK PEOPLE

A guide for friends &
peers



Keele
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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.

With the recent Black Lives Matter protests occurring across the world, you might be wondering what you can do to support black people, and in particular the black people within your friendship groups, workplaces or communities.

Within this guide, we will make recommendations of ways you can educate yourself about the inequalities black people face, provide some information about how to be an active bystander and how to provide support to a friend or colleague.

At Keele University, we pride ourselves on welcoming all students, and our black students and staff contribute to this diverse community and should feel safe and supported.



Educate yourself on the specific challenges black people face

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.

If you want to learn more, we would recommend these resources*...

*some of these resources may contain upsetting scenes and explicit language

Books

- Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race by Reni-Eddo-Lodge
- Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging by Afua Hirsch
- Me and White Supremacy by Layla F Saad
- Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empires by Akala
- Don't Touch My Hair by Emma Dabiri
- Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women White Feminists Forgot by Mikki Kendall
- Slay In Your Lane: The Black Girl Bible by Yomi Adegoke & Elizabeth Uviebinene
- White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Alex Haley and Malcolm X
- Girl, Woman, Others by Bernardine Evaristo
- Black and British by David Olusoga
- How to be Anti-racist by Ibram X. Kendi

Articles & Websites

- 'Healing from the effects of internalized oppression' - An article by the University of Kansas
- The Free Black University
- Why You Need To Stop Saying 'All Lives Matter'
- Racial Justice Resources
- 10 Steps to Non-Optical Allyship

TV Programmes, Documentaries & Films

- I Am Not Your Negro (2016)
- 13th (2016)
- Malcolm X (1992)
- Who Killed Malcolm X? (2020)
- When They See Us (2019)
- Dear White People (2017)

Podcasts

- Growing up with gal-dem with Liv Little and Charlie Brinkhurst Cuff
- Southbank Centre, Angela Davis: Women, Race and Class in the post-Trump era

SUPPORTING A FRIEND

Friends are often the first person that we talk to when we are having a difficult time.

Starting a conversation with a friend...

Where

Choose somewhere quiet without interruptions where you can have a relaxed conversation. Do something relaxing. Sometimes it's easier to talk openly when the focus isn't just on the conversation you're having. You might like to suggest going for a walk together, or invite your friend round for a drink or a meal.

When

Make sure you have enough time to chat. If you have a short amount of time to talk this can put more pressure on the conversation, and if you have to leave halfway through they may feel hurt or interpret your leaving in the wrong way.

You might have shared initial concerns with others in your friendship group, but remember that it might be intimidating if you all approach your friend as a group. It might be easier to have a conversation when it is just the two of you. This should also be reflected in your language – saying 'I' rather than 'we'.

Avoid difficult times. It's probably best to avoid starting a deep conversation at times that are particularly difficult or stressful for individuals. For example meal times or food shopping for a student with an eating disorder.

Things to remember...

- **Be prepared:** You might find it helpful to write down some of the things you want to say, either just to prompt yourself, or as a letter to give to your friend.
- **Consider your body language:** Try to keep your body language open and approachable throughout the conversation.
- **Try to focus on thoughts and feelings rather than behaviours:** This helps you to look at the bigger picture of what is going on in your friend's life rather than getting caught up in the ins and outs of specific behaviours.
- **Respecting privacy:** Remember that your friend might not be ready for other people to know just yet – be supportive and encouraging, and offer to be on hand when they decide to tell their GP, tutor or another friend.

In the conversation itself...

- **Don't worry about not understanding everything that your friend is going through,** or not knowing exactly the right thing to say. Try not to act shocked or surprised as this could make your friend feel uncomfortable. Don't worry about giving advice – simply by giving your friend the opportunity to talk, you are showing them that they are not alone and that you are there for them.
- **Ask open questions** such as 'What can I do to support you with that?'. These types of questions give more opportunity for conversation and are more likely to encourage your friend to open up about their concerns. Try to be supportive and understanding when you ask questions.
- **Use language that is reflective** as a way to show that you have really heard what your friend is trying to say and to help reflect back emotions that your friend might not have initially recognised.
- **If your friend is finding it difficult to open up in person consider letter writing.** If a friend wants to talk but doesn't know what to say, you could suggest that they write to you as a useful first step.

If things get tougher

- If your friend is having a tough time, they may find themselves feeling more irritable or anxious, or feel their mood rapidly changing from one moment to the next. If you are worried that this is putting a strain on your friendship, try to remember that their behaviour doesn't reflect on you or your relationship. Ups and downs are a normal part of life: give them time and allow them to confide in you when they're ready.

You can also:

- Do small things to show you care. This can really help to bridge the gap between you if things seem difficult: send them a text to make them smile or drop by their room with a cup of tea.
- Encourage your friend to reflect on any particular situations that they find difficult and whether there is anything you could do to help. They could do this through a letter if it feels more comfortable.
- Remember that motivation to change varies over time and depends a lot on the situation. If your friend is having a hard day, they may seem more negative about their ability to cope. Simply by being a supportive friend, you can really help to give them the courage and motivation they need to start making positive changes.

You can find out more about how to look after your mate here.

BEING AN ACTIVE BYSTANDER

We can all be bystanders. Every day events unfold around us. At some point, we will register someone in danger. When this happens, we will decide to do or say something (and become an active bystander), or to simply let it go (and remain a passive bystander).

How to be an Active Bystander:

Sometimes, a situation just does not feel right. It might be comments made by a friend that you feel are inappropriate or you spot someone being harassed at a party or club. Being an active bystander means being aware of when someone's behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to challenge it. If you do not feel comfortable doing this directly, then get someone to help you such as a friend or someone in authority.

We would encourage members of the Keele community to:

- Step in and give help (if it's safe), or step out and get help (if it's unsafe)
- Empower those close to them to step up
- Do whatever they can do to create and maintain a safe and supportive University community

“IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING, DO SOMETHING”

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. Find out more here. 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.