

Black

our minds
matter

youth

minds

matter



overview

BLACK YOUTH MINDS MATTER

why does Black youth mental health matter?

Our Minds Matter recognizes that Black youth face unique **mental health** challenges. This is a result of a variety of experiences such as **generational trauma**, historical and current **oppression**, the current political climate, and much more. In this guide, we seek to: provide activities and actions for both Black youth and aspiring allies, share self-care resources for Black youth, reduce the **stigma** around mental health conversations for Black teens, and amplify organizations that work to support Black mental health.

guide goals:

- Define mental health
- Promote wellness, healing, and self-care for Black youth
- Promote equity, awareness, and education about the importance of Black youth mental health
- Acknowledge structural and cultural barriers to accessing mental health resources
- Increase awareness of accessible and culturally relevant mental health resources for Black youth
- Amplify Black organizations that support Black youth mental health
- Reduce the stigma around Black youth's mental health
- Equip Black teens with tools to protect their own mental health
- Equip non-Black teens with tools to create inclusive and welcoming spaces for their Black peers, especially during times when hateful rhetoric is especially present in politics and media

things to know about Black youth mental health



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Throughout history, Black Americans have had a complicated relationship with the U.S. healthcare system. There have been **events** where Black people have been subject to harmful medical experiments without their consent and other forms of malpractice. Additionally, Black Americans face more **barriers to mental health care** than other racial groups and are not regularly included in mental health research. For these reasons and others, mental health issues in Black Americans may not always be recognized and validated. This can make it difficult for Black Americans to feel comfortable looking for mental health support.

For some folks, negative political rhetoric around immigrants or a fear of violence keeps them from reaching out for help. It can be hard to trust health care or government systems to help when there is a threat of deportation, discrimination, or harm. Because of this, Black immigrant youth can face an additional unique set of challenges that shape their mental health.

Today, more and more people are working to make mental health safe and welcoming for more cultures and identities. By staying curious and advocating for change, we can support one another and build accessible, representative mental health spaces for the Black community.

Fast Facts:

suicide rates in Black youth ages 5 to 11 have increased

Over the past few decades, they have become double that of White youth in the same age group.

([SAMHSA](#))

suicide rates in Black girls, young women, and LGBTQ+ Black youth are rising at an alarming rate

([Columbia.edu](#) and [The Trevor Project](#))

only 4% of psychologists are Black

Black youth have limited representation in their mental health care providers. ([APA](#))

many Black youth struggle with **complex racial trauma**

Given that, youth need **culturally competent** mental health care providers so that they do not perpetuate stereotypes or increase **barriers to care**. ([NIH](#))

47 states do not meet the minimum number of counselors

Forty-seven states do not have the minimum number of counselors required to meet the Department of Education's recommended student-to-counselor ratio. ([Salud America!](#))

a note on black immigrant youth & mental health



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Many Black Americans have had family living in the United States for generations, usually with ancestors who were enslaved. However, approximately **20%** of Black people in the United States are immigrants or the children of immigrants ([Pew](#)). Many Black immigrant families in the US come from places like Africa, the Caribbean, or Central and South America ([Pew](#)). When they move to the US, these folks, like many other immigrant populations, can feel like they are living in two different worlds at once and have unique challenges and strengths that impact their mental health.

- **Acculturation Stress (n)**: “Acculturation” is the way people have immigrated to a new country try to balance their home culture with the culture of the country they now live in. This can include speaking one language at home and one at school, or feeling anxiety about fully fitting into one culture or another. This balancing act can be stressful and the strain can lead to physical or mental health challenges ([Science Direct](#)).
- **Families Across Borders**: Many immigrant teens have family members in the US, while others like grandparents and cousins, still live in their home country. This can cause teens to feel pressure to succeed or take on extra responsibility as a way of honoring their parent’s and family’s hard work. Teens may also feel sad or homesick for their family overseas ([Science Direct](#)).
- **Mental Health Stigma (n)**: For teens and families who have immigrated to the United States, they can face additional barriers to getting quality mental health care, including cultural beliefs and language differences ([Wiley Online](#)). How mental health is talked about depends on a person’s individual culture, family, and personal experiences.

This guide is not just about challenges - it is a celebration of the **incredible strengths** and **diversity** found in Black communities. Whether your family has been in the U.S. for generations or has arrived more recently, the history of the Black community in the United States is one of resilience, creativity, and community. When you care for your mental health or encourage others to do the same, you take part in the revolutionary act of helping make self-love, joy, and healing more accessible to everyone.



- **Afro-centric (adj.):** Relating to and or embracing African culture/heritage.
- **Ally (n.):** A person who supports and speaks up for the rights of underrepresented groups (ex: BIPOC, LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities) without being a member of that group ([Oxford English Dictionary](#)).
- **Barrier to care (n.):** An obstacle that prevents a person from seeking or receiving health care, including mental health care. (Ex: Cost, stigma, lack of transportation.) ([ASDA](#))
- **Cultural competence (n.):** The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from your own ([APA](#)).
- **Intersectionality (n.):** First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black American lawyer and activist, intersectionality refers to the way a person's different identities - like race, disability status, culture, gender, sexuality, etc. - interact with one another. A person's overlapping identities cause them to experience the world differently from others who may be similar in other ways ([NIH](#)). For example, a Black woman has different struggles than a white woman, even though they both identify as women.
- **Mental health (n.):** A state of mind based on our emotional well-being, behavior, ability to form healthy relationships and to deal with everyday stress ([APA](#)). (Note: Everyone has mental health! However, not everyone has a mental health disorder, ex: depression, anxiety.)
- **Mental health care providers/Mental health professionals (n.):** People who identify and treat mental health concerns. (Note: A person does not have to have a serious mental health concern to see a mental health professional.)
- **Minority Stress Theory (n.):** A specific kind of stress experienced by people with minority identities, such as people of color, members of the LGBTQI+ community, or people with disabilities. This stress comes from differences in how people with minority identities are raised and viewed by others, and by specific events targeting these identities, like discrimination or the passage of harmful laws. People who experience minority stress are at greater risk for mental and physical health problems ([NIH](#))
- **Oppression (n.):** Occurs when one group of people uses its power and privilege to unfairly dominate another group ([APA](#)).
- **Stigma (n.):** A negative attitude/judgment toward a certain characteristic a person has ([APA](#)).
- **Trauma (n.):** The experience, witnessing of, or a recurring stressful event where a person's life is threatened, or a person is exposed to death, violence, or disaster. Examples can include a car accident, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or

witnessing violence, death/loss of a loved one, etc.) A traumatic event can negatively affect a person's physical, social, emotional, mental, or spiritual well-being and function. Examples of trauma symptoms can include flashbacks to the event, avoidance of things associated with the event, negative self-image, sudden, unpredictable feelings of anger, and more. ([APA](#), [SAMHSA](#)). Trauma is a complex topic, and different kinds of trauma can include:

- **Intergenerational trauma (n.):** The passing on of psychological trauma or its effects from one generation to the next generation. This kind of trauma can be passed through both physical stress in the body and by our experiences growing up, like difficult relationships or low self-esteem. ([APA](#)).
- **Complex racial trauma, race-based trauma (n.):** Trauma caused by exposure to racism, racial discrimination, harmful cultural stereotypes or other race-related stressors. ([National Center for PTSD](#)).



ideas for your club:

1 lead an OMM activity related to personal wellness or creating inclusive spaces

Read on to see activity suggestions that focus on self-care for Black youth and increasing awareness for aspiring allies.

2 amplify the message on [Instagram](#)

Check out the [Black Youth Minds Matter Social Media Toolkit](#) for additional graphics to download and post. See additional resources at the end of this guide for other organizations you can follow.

3 collaborate with your school's Black Student Union

If your school has a Black Student Union — an affinity group for Black students — consider reaching out to collaborate! You can work together to plan a club meeting, discussion, etc. that highlights the importance of Black youth mental health and creates a safe space for your fellow peers. (*Note that the club may be called something else at your school.)

4 organize an event, campaign, or other initiative in honor of Black History Month

Connect with your club sponsor and/or school administration to see if your Our Minds Matter club can organize an event raising awareness around Black mental health during Black History Month (BHM). Also be on the lookout for any events your school may already have planned for BHM. For instance, Northwood High School's Northwood Minds Matter participated in a school-wide gallery walk, where they highlighted Black mental health leaders and advocates. Read their full club feature [here!](#)



OMM activities can support the personal well-being of young Black people and help cultivate inclusive spaces for all.

Use the information below to log into the Our Minds Matter website and access our activities, even if you don't have a club.



URL: ourmindsmatter.org/downloads/BYMM-club-guide

Username: Club Guides

Password: OMMclubguide25!

the power of music



Within the Black community, music is commonly used as a form of self-expression, storytelling, protest/resistance, celebration, and an overall cultural cornerstone. As many may know, music genres such as Hip-Hop, the Blues, and R&B were all birthed within the Black community. These contributions and many others have shaped music. In the Power of Music activity, students can learn coping skills, celebrate different genres of music, and explore the impact music can have based on different emotions.

making self-care actionable



Many Black youth face social inequalities and traumas that can impact their mental health. Now more than ever, youth need radical self-care to recover from the pressures of society! The Making Self-Care Actionable activity helps students create a schedule that prioritizes self-care in their daily routines.

my own emoji



Representation — being able to see yourself and people who look like you in all aspects of society — is incredibly important for mental health, self-esteem, and building a sense of belonging. Giving all teens the opportunity to create an emoji that represents their ethnicity, race, culture, or anything unique about them not only allows them to feel seen but increases awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusivity.

line of privilege



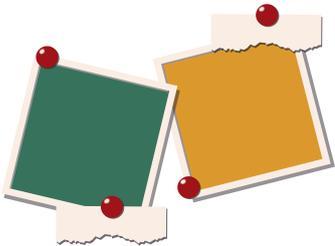
This is a great activity to increase awareness about societal inequalities around race, ethnicity, and other marginalized identities. When teens have a better understanding of both the privilege they may hold AND the oppression they may face, they can gain a better understanding of themselves and their peers. This can ultimately foster more connection, inclusion, and belonging for all teens, especially those who are marginalized. This can feel heavy, so we recommend pairing this one with a self-care activity!

you're beautiful



Black is Beautiful is a cultural movement that was created in the 1960s as a response to Black people rejecting their skin color and other **Afrocentric** features. This was due to the popularity of white/European beauty standards in American culture and media. The movement encouraged Black people to embrace and recognize their Afrocentric traits (ex: natural hairstyles and textures) as beautiful. You're Beautiful is a short and simple activity that encourages students to recognize the beauty within themselves and the importance of acknowledging the beauty in others. Read more about the Black is Beautiful Movement from the National Museum of African American History and Culture [here](#).

vision boarding



On August 28, 1963, civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous [“I Have a Dream”](#) speech at Lincoln Memorial. In “I Have a Dream,” Dr. King describes his vision and hopes for a future of racial equality and integration across America. This speech to the nation also came at the end of the March on Washington, where people advocated for civil and economic rights for Black Americans. To help other future leaders with planning their vision of hope, we are highlighting our Vision Boarding activity. This activity helps students to plan and manifest their dreams for their future.

Black culture jeopardy!



Learn, celebrate, empower, and find joy in all things Black culture with our Black Culture Jeopardy! This is a great activity for Black folks to play and celebrate their own culture, and a great activity for non-Black peers to learn and celebrate too!

just because poems



Maya Angelou was known for her poetic writing style, and she used it to share the personal stories of many civil rights activists, such as Tupac Shakur, Malcolm X, and James Baldwin. The Just Because Poems activity gives teens the space to explore their identities and the misconceptions folks may have about them. It also helps start discussions to break down stereotypes, celebrate differences, learn from each others' perspectives, and connect across cultures.

the rain game



“Ubuntu” is a Swahili saying that means “I am because we are,” and it is to acknowledge that despite our differences, we are all one people. The Rain Game activity shares the importance of collaboration and overcoming adversity.

race & privilege: an overdue conversation



Use this digital expansion pack of the popular conversational game We’re Not Really Strangers to engage in necessary discussions about race and privilege. Please note that these conversations can be difficult and heavy, so ensure that a club sponsor is present and that everyone stays in their growth zone. (Brought to you by [*We’re Not Really Strangers*](#).)

mental health resources



BLACK YOUTH MINDS MATTER

if you or someone you know is in crisis:



- Call or text **1 (800) 604-5841** for BIPOC crisis support from BlackLine
- Text **“MIND”** to **741741** for 24/7 free support from Crisis Text Line
- Text **“START”** to **678678** for 24/7 free support from The Trevor Project
- Call **988** for 24/7 free support from the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

therapy and direct services

- [Therapy for Black Girls](#)
- [Melanin & Mental Health](#)
- [The Loveland Foundation](#)
- [Therapy for Black Men](#)
- [Black Men Heal](#)
- [National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)
- [Inclusive Therapists](#)
- [Safe Black Space](#)
- [Finding a Therapist of Color](#)

general mental health resources and advocacy info

- [AAKOMA Project](#)
- [The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation \(BLHF\)](#)
- [Black Alliance for Just Immigration \(BAJI\)](#)
- [Black Emotional And Mental Health \(BEAM\)](#)
- [Black Girls Smile](#)
- [Black Mental Health Alliance](#)
- [Ourselves Black](#)
- [Therapy for Black Girls Podcast](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)

organizations to follow on Instagram

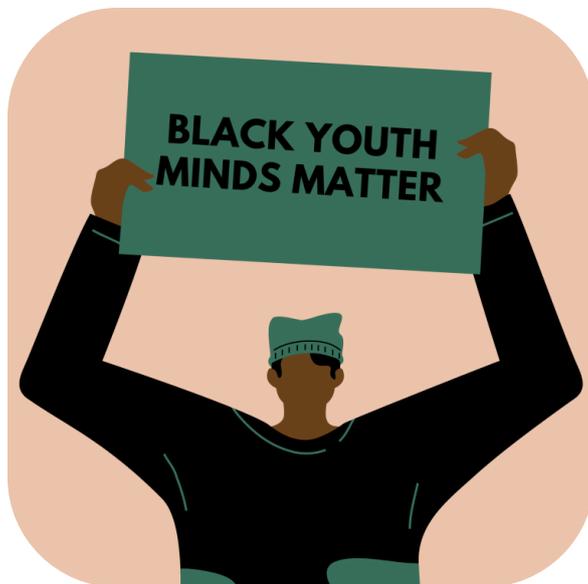
- The AAKOMA Project ([@aakomaproject](#))
- National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network ([@nqttn](#))
- Therapy for Black Girls ([@therapyforblackgirls](#))
- The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation ([@blhensonfoundation](#))
- Black Men Heal ([@blackmenheal](#))
- Black Girl in Om ([@blackgirlinom](#))

individuals to follow on Instagram

- Dr. Alfree Breland-Noble - The AAKOMA Project Founder ([@dralfree](#))
- Dr. Raquel Martin - Psychologist, Professor ([@raquelmartinphd](#))
- Kier Gaines - Licensed Therapist ([@kiergaines](#))
- Rwenshaun Miller - Psychotherapist, Athlete ([@rwenshaun](#))
- Nedra Tawwab - Licensed Therapist ([@nedratawwab](#))
- Koya Webb - Yoga Teacher, Holistic Health and Wellness Coach ([@koyawebb](#))

videos, interviews & more

- [Black Mental Health Printable Resources Infographic](#)
- [The Steve Fund](#)
- [Black-Owned Wellness Apps](#)
- [Taraji P. Henson on Living with Depression & Anxiety](#)
- [Cutting Through the Stigma: NAMI \(National Alliance on Mental Illness\) and The Confess Project](#)
- [A conversation on mental health: Vice President Harris sits down with Kier Gaines](#)
- ABC News: [Black women talk mental health and healing in powerful roundtable discussion](#)
- Good Morning America: [“What to know about ‘Black girl depression’”](#)



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