



DELTA | FAMILY  
RESOURCE  
CENTER



## TRIBE Identity Royalty African Leadership

Delta Family Resource Centre &  
OLORI Partners Present:

**MENTAL HEALTH VS MENTAL ILLNESS:  
IDENTIFYING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS  
+ COPING STRATEGIES  
1ST EDITION DECEMBER 2022**

Funded by:





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## MISSION STATEMENT

OLORI, The Yoruba word for “leadership”, is a youth initiative aimed at facilitating a change in how Black youth’s voices are heard by allowing them to engage in meaningful discussions. These discussions include the socio-political realm within the city of Toronto, by focusing on changing the “single narrative” which so often defines and limits black youth. OLORI works with four partners (FYI, Black Creek Community Health Centre, Somali Women and Children Network, Urban Rez Solutions) to engage youth in the west and other parts of the city in a series of activities which promote innovative interventions that create opportunities for Black youth leadership.

## PURPOSE OF TOOLKIT

The purpose of this mental health toolkit is to shine a light on the mental health of black youth within the city of Toronto and ensure that their voices are heard. We want to normalize conversations around mental health and mental illness in the black community so that we can comfortably recognize warning signs, increase our ability to manage stress, and utilize effective coping strategies. This toolkit will serve as a starting point in obtaining information on mental health and where to find help through a large resources list.



Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. (Centre for Disease and Control, 2021)

## MENTAL HEALTH VS MENTAL ILLNESS

### Mental Health and Mental Illness

#### Mental health

Capacity to think, feel, and act in ways that enhance our ability to:

- Enjoy life
- Deal with challenges

#### Mental health problems

Diminished capacities (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, etc.) that interfere with:

- Enjoyment of life
- Interactions with society and our environment

#### Mental illness

Conditions that affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood, or behaviour, including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)



Mental health and Mental illness are often used interchangeably, but they are NOT the same thing. We have to remember that everyone has mental health, whether it be good or bad.

Mental illness is the reduced ability for a person to function effectively over time because of:

- Significant levels of distress
- Changes in thinking, mood, or behaviour
- Feelings of isolation, loneliness and sadness
- The feeling of being disconnected from people and activities

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2017)

**Mental illness is a specific condition that can be diagnosed.**

## MENTAL HEALTH VS MENTAL ILLNESS

### What's a Mental Illness?

A mental health condition that has a negative effect on the way an individual...



thinks



feels



and behaves

verywell

Mental illness is NOT the same as feeling distressed because of normal reactions to difficult situations, such as:

- Death of a loved one
- Job loss
- Romantic breakup
- Sudden change of circumstances, likes moving to a new area, attending a new school, going through a divorce

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2017)



## WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?

### CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS



- Early adverse life experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)
- Experiences related to other ongoing (chronic) medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes
- Biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Having feelings of loneliness or isolation

(Centre for Disease and Control, 2021)

## FACTS

### WHY WE NEED TO IMPROVE BLACK HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Black Canadians represent 2.9% of the overall Canadian population, but represent 18% of Canadians living in poverty in Canada. (Statistics Canada, 2009)



People of Caribbean, East, West African origin in Ontario have 60% increased risk of psychosis. (Anderson, Cheng, Susser, McKenzie, and Kurdyak, 2015)



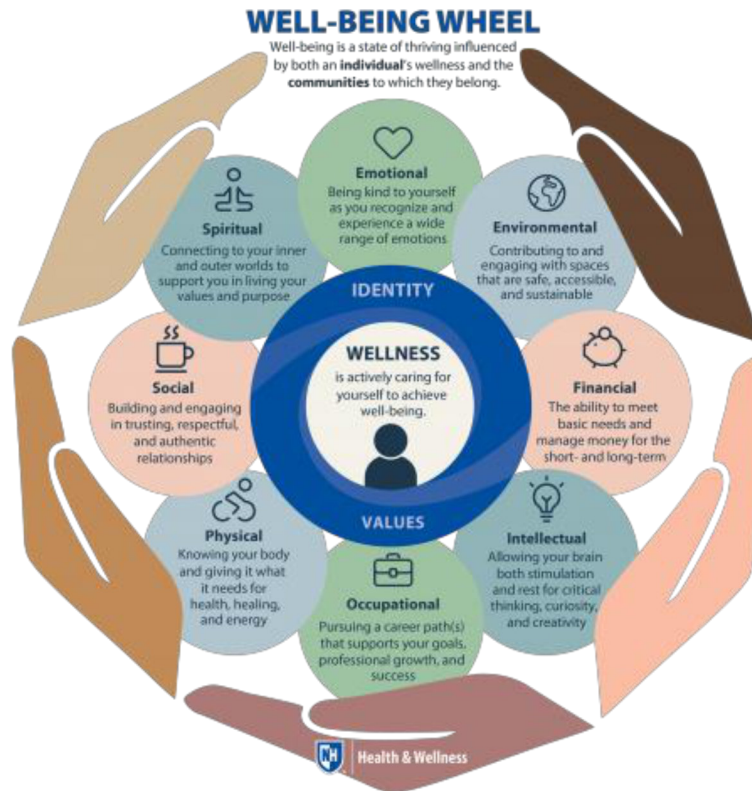
Black women are 43% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women. (Marc Hurlbert, PhD, Chief Mission Officer, Breast Cancer Research Foundation)



A 2012 report by the Wellesley Institute found Black immigrants in Canada were 76% more likely to assess themselves as "unhealthy" than other racialized groups.

Courtesy of Black Health Alliance Canada





## WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS?

## SPECIFIC MENTAL ILLNESSES

**MOOD  
DISORDERS**

**SCHIZOPHRENIA**

**ANXIETY  
DISORDERS**

**PERSONALITY  
DISORDERS**

**PROBLEM  
GAMBLING**

**SUBSTANCE  
DEPENDENCY**

**EATING  
DISORDERS**



Mental illness takes many forms, including:

**MOOD DISORDERS** that affect how you feel such as: Depression & Bipolar Disorder

**SCHIZOPHRENIA** which causes mixed-up thoughts, delusions, or hallucinations

**ANXIETY DISORDERS** which cause intense and prolonged fear that is not based on actual threat or danger

**PERSONALITY DISORDERS** is a type of mental disorder in which someone has unhealthy patterns of thinking, functioning, and behaving

**PROBLEM GAMBLING**

**SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCY**

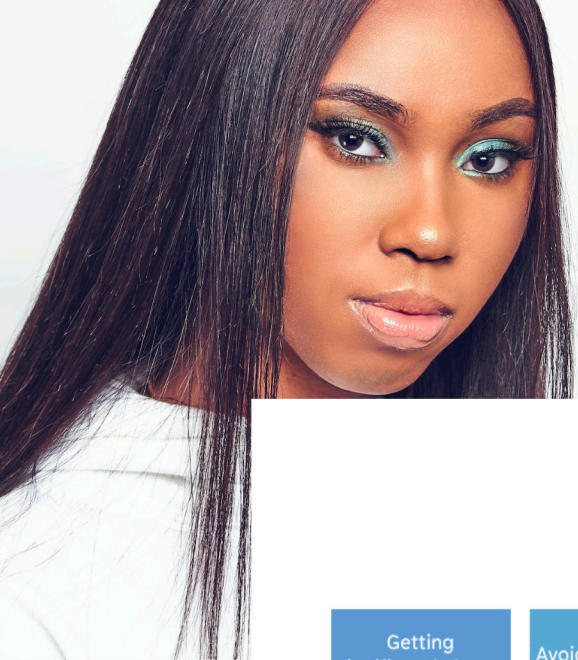
**EATING DISORDERS** which influence eating behaviors and are accompanied by negative thoughts about body shape and weight such as: anorexia and bulimia

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2017)

## RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A MENTAL ILLNESS



- It is crucial that we are able to comfortably identify and recognize warning signs and symptoms of mental illness in order to have better mental health outcomes.



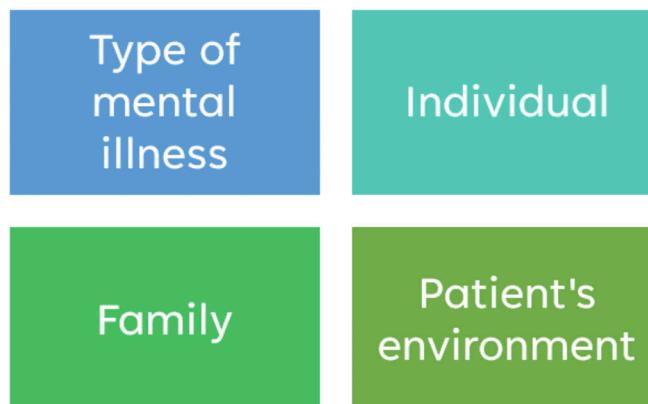
## WARNING SIGNS



PRESENTATION TITLE

9

## Severity of symptoms depends on:



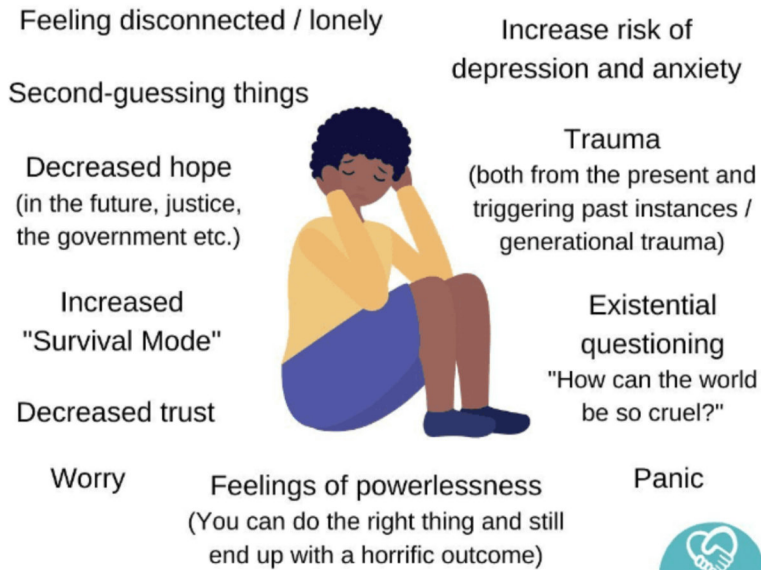
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## IMPACTS OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM ON MENTAL HEALTH

### The Impact Of Racism On Mental Health:



#BlackLivesMatter

@RealDepressionProject



## BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



PRESENTATION TITLE

8

## STIGMA

- Unfortunately, mental health is a taboo topic in the black community. There is often shame associated with poor mental health, with many people believing that it may be a sign of weakness. Stigma is preventing individuals from seeking help for their mental health issues.



## SYSTEMIC INEQUITY

- Black persons in Canada are more likely to experience challenges in finding family physicians, who often serve as an important gateway to mental health care.

(Coleman & Best, 2020)





## DIFFICULTY RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS/LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

- Studies have found that difficulty recognizing symptoms of depression and a lack of information about mental health prevented Black people (especially older adults) from seeking mental health services when symptoms first presented themselves.

(Connor, et al., 2010)



## FINDING A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COUNSELOR

- It can be difficult to build trust if the person seeking help does not believe that the professional can relate to their experience or understand their point of view. The mental health professional must understand the impacts of anti-black racism and cultural biases.



## IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND COPING STRATEGIES

You can maintain or improve your mental health by following the advice below:

- Know and accept that life can be challenging
- Know and accept your strengths and weaknesses
- Set realistic goals for yourself
- Accept yourself and others. This is the basis of self-esteem
- Learn to recognize and understand that you and others have both positive and negative feelings
- Create a sense of meaning in your life by learning and trying new activities, like starting a hobby
- Create healthy, trusting relationships with people who accept and support you

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2015)



## COPING STRATEGIES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS AS A

### RESULT OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

- Practicing self-compassion
- Thinking about how you would comfort another person who is experiencing the same situation and affording yourself the same compassion
- Repeat a positive mantra – a mantra can be a word such as “courage” or a phrase like “this is a tough situation, but I will get through it”
- Surround yourself with allies who know your value and worth
- Remind yourself that you are not to blame for the racial behaviors you experience
- Make a list of things you are proud of or that make you uniquely you
- Practice mindfulness
- Meditation
- Learn about free online virtual mental health supports

(Chappell, 2021)



## DE-STIGMATIZE FINDING HELP

We must normalize seeking support for mental health and realize that not only those who have mental illnesses should be seeking support, as everyone has mental health whether it be good or bad. We can also:

- In care settings, ensure that all professionals receive cultural competency training to better understand the factors that may contribute to poor mental health in Black communities, including the unique challenges faced by immigrants and refugees

(Mental health commission)

## RESOURCES: WHERE TO FIND HELP

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/96a4-t4a-abr-bmh-resources.pdf>

<https://yssn.ca/uphub-toolkit-activities/>

<https://blackhealthalliance.ca/resources/community/>

<https://www.stepstonesforyouth.com/resources/youth-resources/services-for-black-youth/>



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