Mental Health & COVID-19

How Can We Help Our Families and Youth of Color Cope?

Erikka Dzirasa, MD, MPH, DFAACAP
Impact of COVID-19 on Youth

2020 Top 10 Child Health Concerns

Among Black Parents
1. Racism 82%
2. COVID 73%
3. Overuse of social media 70%
4. Unhealthy eating 68%
5. Internet safety 67%
6. Bullying/cyberbullying 66%
7. Poverty 66%
8. Drinking or using drugs 62%
9. Unequal healthcare access 62%
10. Gun injuries 61%

Among Hispanic Parents
1. Overuse of social media 73%
2. Bullying/cyberbullying 72%
3. Internet safety 72%
4. Smoking/vaping 67%
5. Drinking or using drugs 67%
6. Racism 65%
7. Depression/suicide 64%
8. COVID 64%
9. Stress/anxiety 62%
10. Child abuse & neglect 61%

Among White Parents
1. Overuse of social media 72%
2. Bullying/cyberbullying 58%
3. Internet safety 57%
4. Unhealthy eating 56%
5. Lack of physical activity 53%
6. Stress/anxiety 51%
7. Depression/suicide 49%
8. Smoking/vaping 46%
9. Child abuse & neglect 42%
10. Drinking or using drugs 41%

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2020
COVID-19 & RACISM
COVID-19 & RACISM
Adjusted for age, other racial groups are this many times more likely to have died of COVID-19 than White Americans

Reflects cumulative mortality rates calculated through March 2, 2021.

- INDIGENOUS: 3.3
- PACIFIC ISLANDER: 2.6
- LATINO: 2.4
- BLACK: 2
- WHITE: 1
- ASIAN: 1

The Burden of COVID-19

- Social isolation
- Zoom fatigue
- Changes in routine
- Anticipatory anxiety
- Loss/Grief
- Parental stress
- Health disparities
- Financial
- Food insecurity
- Lack of supervision
- Domestic violence
- Emotional/physical abuse
- Substance use
Our Youth Are at Risk

- Development:
  - Emotional
  - Social
  - Cognitive
  - Physical
- Genetics
- Prenatal factors
- Family relationships
- Parental depression/mental health problems
- Stressful life events
- Lack of parental care
- Trauma
Types of Mental Health Conditions

- Mood Disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Substance Use Disorders
- Behavioral Disorders/ADHD
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Learning difficulties
Common Warning Signs:

- Sadness or apathy
- Sensitivity/emotional reactivity
- Temper Tantrums
- Irritability/Aggression
- Anxiety
- Lack of energy/motivation
- Social isolation
- Negative thinking/hopelessness/shame/guilt
- Poor attention/concentration, changes in grades
- Changes in appetite
- Insomnia/Hypersomnia
- Suicidal thoughts/Self-injurious behaviors
What Do I Say or Do If I Suspect My Child Is Suffering From Mental Illness?
What Do I Say or Do If I Suspect My Child Is Suffering From Mental Illness?

- Recognize symptoms early
- Create a welcoming and safe environment
- Ask!
- Listen without judgment
- Seek resources
- Break stigma
- Have hope
Barriers to Treatment

Black youth are less likely to:

- receive psychiatric diagnosis
- receive outpatient services
- complete treatment
- receive culturally informed care
Barriers to Treatment

- Fear
- Shame
- Stigma
- Misdiagnosis
- Mistrust
- Religion/Spirituality
- Misunderstanding
- Racism
- Resources
- Transportation
- Finances
- Bias
• Black physicians are 5x more likely to treat Black patients

• Black physicians viewed as “more participatory”

• Blacks represent only 2% of psychiatrists, 2% of psychologists, and 4% of social workers
Promoting Parent Mental Wellness
Put Your Oxygen On First!!

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Care
- Self-Disclosure
- Set the Example!
My Info:

erikka.dzirasa@catalystnc.com