
Supporting Black Women in Mental Health: Culturally Responsive Practices for Clinicians

Empowering Black women through culturally aware mental health support



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Welcome!

Introductions & Agenda

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Danie – Introduction

Donna – Introduction

Agenda

- Understanding Unique Mental Health Needs of Black Women
 - Culturally Responsive Approaches to Therapy
 - Self Care and Empowerment
 - Interventions
 - Conclusion
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Learning Objectives:

- Understand the impact of systemic racism and the "strong Black woman" archetype on Black women's mental health and their engagement in care.
- Develop skills in cultural humility and trauma-informed care to build trust and foster effective therapeutic relationships with Black women.
- Identify and implement culturally responsive interventions and strategies that address the unique needs of Black women, integrating community resources and client empowerment.

Understanding the Unique Mental Health Needs of Black Women

Understand the impact of systemic racism and the "strong Black woman" archetype on Black women's mental health and their engagement in care



Strong Black Woman Archetype

The 'strong Black woman' stereotype pressures Black women to appear resilient and self-reliant, leading to emotional suppression and increased stress.

Impact on Mental Health

Systemic racism and stereotypes contribute to emotional suppression, increased stress, and deter seeking help among Black women.

Need for Culturally Competent Care

Addressing mental health issues requires culturally competent care and awareness of the unique challenges faced by Black women.



Strong Black Woman Archetype

Origin of the Archetype

The 'strong Black woman' archetype originated during slavery, requiring women to maintain composure and suppress emotions to survive.

Generational Impact

This survival trait has been passed down generations, impacting the mental health and emotional well-being of African American women today.

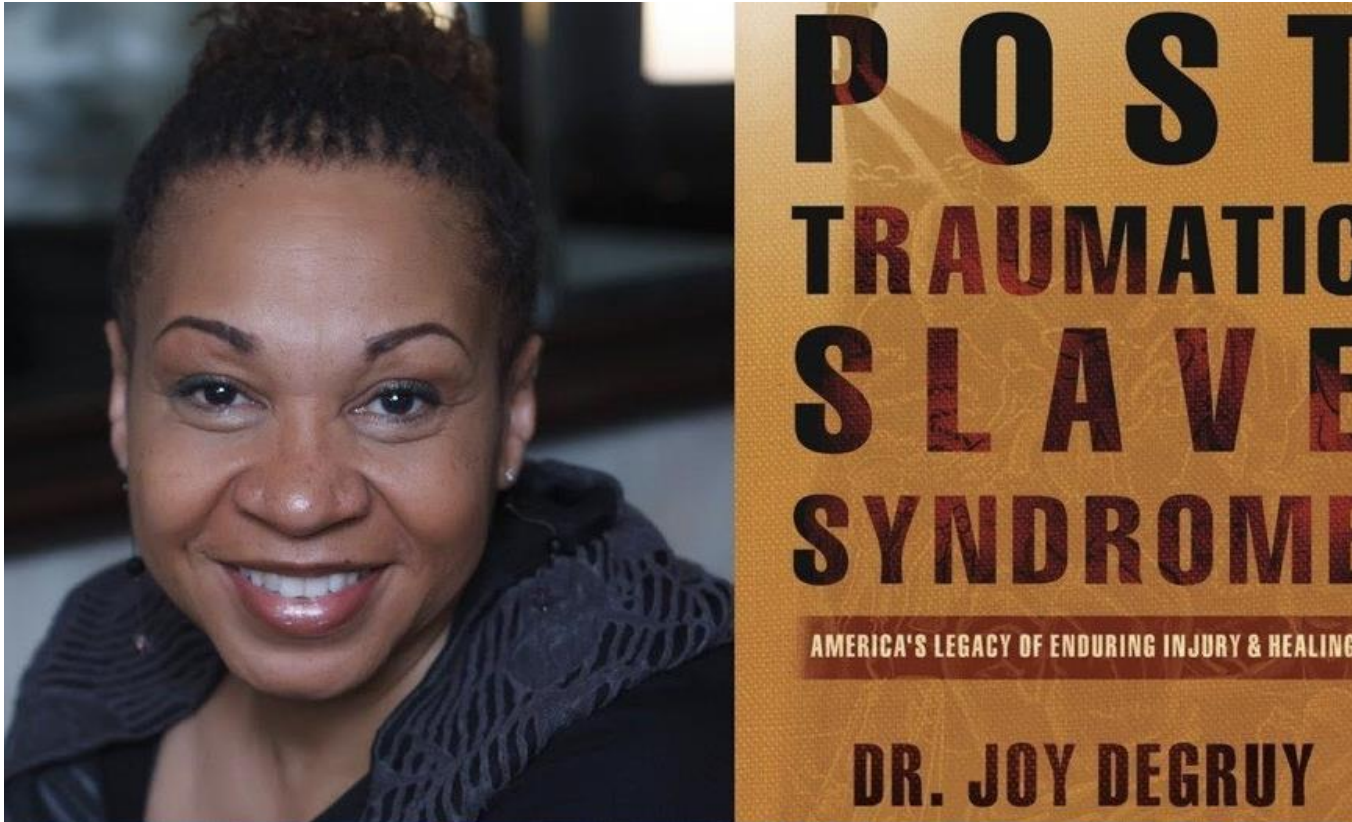
Emotional Suppression

The archetype often prevents women from seeking help, perpetuating a cycle of emotional suppression and self-reliance.

Fear of Perceived Weakness

Fear of being perceived as weak or helpless often prevents African American women from seeking support and help.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome



Theory Development

Dr. Joy DeGruy developed the theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, highlighting the residual impacts of generations of slavery.

Book Overview

Her book 'Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome – America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing' discusses the lasting effects of slavery on the black community.

Community Strength

The book addresses how the black community can use the strengths developed over time to heal in the present.

Important Discussions

It opens up important discussions on the enduring injury caused by slavery and the path to healing.

Study on Mental Illness



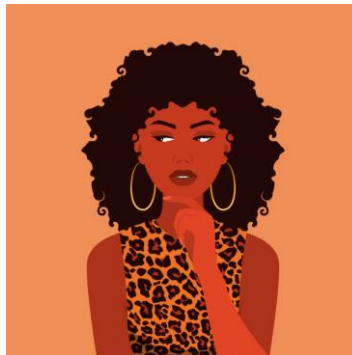
Study Participants

The study involved 185 African American women aged between 25 to 85, offering a wide range of perspectives on mental illness.



Causes of Mental Illness

Participants identified multiple causes of mental illness, including family-related stress and social stress from racism.



Perception and Control

The study revealed that mental illness is seen as cyclical with serious consequences but can be managed with appropriate treatment.

Beliefs and Coping Strategies

Low Perception of Stigma

Participants showed a low perception of stigma associated with mental illness, indicating more acceptance and openness to discuss mental health.

Preferred Coping Strategies

Major coping strategies among women included praying and seeking medical and mental health care, showing reliance on both spiritual and professional support.

Age Differences in Beliefs

The study found age differences in beliefs about mental illness, preferred coping strategies, and perception of control, highlighting how views vary across different age groups.



Mental Health in African American Woman



Prevalence of Mental Illness

Approximately 7.5 million African Americans have a diagnosed mental illness, with millions more potentially undiagnosed.

Sociopolitical Stressors

Racism, discrimination, and sexism increase mental health risks for African American women, leading to various health issues.

Impact on Women

African American women face low-income jobs, multiple role strain, and health issues due to sociopolitical stressors.

Link to Mental Illness

Stressors such as racism and discrimination are closely linked to the onset of mental illness in African Americans.

High Risk for Mental Illness



Impact of Chronic Conditions

Disability from chronic conditions significantly affects mental health, increasing the risk of depression and anxiety in older African American women.

Caregiver Strain

The strain of caregiving can lead to mental exhaustion, stress, and depression, contributing to a higher risk of mental illness.

Social Isolation

Social isolation and bereavement due to loss of loved ones can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, increasing the risk of mental illness.

Traumatic Events

Exposure to traumatic events such as elder abuse and neighborhood violence contributes to the development of mental health issues.

Margaret – Donna's Great Aunt

Older African American women may be at particularly high risk for developing mental illness due to disability from chronic medical conditions, caregiver strain, social isolation, bereavement, exposure to traumatic events (elder abuse, violence, living in crime ridden neighborhoods), and poor access to health care (Areán & Reynolds, 2005; Artinian, Washington, Flack, Hockman, & Jen, 2006)”.



Insight on Diagnoses



Common Diagnoses

Black and brown women often receive diagnoses like bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder without adequate explanation, leading to uncertainty.

Treatment Uncertainty

Many Black and brown women feel uncertain about what their diagnoses mean and what treatment options are available to them.

Alternative Diagnoses

Many women believe that criteria for conditions like ADHD or ASD may more accurately reflect their experiences and better align with their symptoms.

A Valley Cities Intake Specialist writes:



“I have found that in working with Black and brown women, if there is a history of interacting with the medical model, often they are given diagnoses like bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder. These women often times are unsure of what the diagnoses means for them and what their options are for treatment, reporting that the diagnosis was not explained to them. Some of these clients will also share that they find that criteria like ADHD or ASD are more accurate to describe their presentation as far as they can tell”.

Social Determinants of Health Metrics for Black Women by State (May 2023)

Health Uninsurance (Aged 19-64) (2017-2021)	Fair/Poor Health (Age 18+) (2021)	Poverty (Age 18+) (2021)	Food Insufficiency (Age 18+) (2020-2022)**	Housing Insecurity (Age 18+) (2020-2022)**
9.6%	20.2%	21.5%	14.7%	20.0%

Metrics for Black Women

Higher Rates of Chronic Diseases

Black women in Washington State face higher rates of chronic diseases, which significantly impact their health and quality of life.

Lower Access to Quality Healthcare

Black women experience lower access to quality healthcare, which exacerbates health disparities and limits their ability to receive timely and effective treatments.

Higher Unemployment Rates

Black women face higher unemployment rates, contributing to economic instability and further impacting their health and well-being.

Disparities in Educational Outcomes

Educational disparities among black women lead to fewer opportunities, affecting their economic and social mobility.

Danie's Aunt, Cousin, and Mom



Video of Anita



Culturally Responsive Approaches to Therapy

Cultural competency is...

a developmental process in which one achieves increasing levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along a continuum, improving one's capacity to work and communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations.



Strategies for practicing cultural competency include:

Learning about your own
and others' cultural
identities

Combating bias and
stereotypes

Respecting others' beliefs,
values, and communication
preferences

Adapting your services to
each patient's unique needs

Gaining new cultural
experiences

Cultural humility is...

is a reflective process of understanding one's biases and privileges, managing power imbalances, and maintaining a stance that is open to others in relation to aspects of their cultural identity that are most important to them.



Strategies for practicing cultural humility include:

Practicing self-reflection, including awareness of your beliefs, values, and implicit biases

Recognizing what you don't know and being open to learning as much as you can

Being open to other people's identities and empathizing with their life experiences

Acknowledging that the patient is their own best authority, not you

Learning and growing from people whose beliefs, values, and worldviews differ from yours

Culturally Responsive is...

acknowledging and adapting to the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of individuals, and responding appropriately to these differences.

Understanding Broaching



Explicitly Addressing Cultural Factors

Broaching involves openly discussing cultural, racial, and ethnic factors with clients or supervisees to understand their experiences better.

Inviting Conversations About Culture

Creating an open dialogue where clients or supervisees feel comfortable sharing their cultural identities and experiences.

Examining Impact of Cultural Factors

Understanding how cultural, racial, and ethnic factors impact individuals' experiences and addressing these influences in therapy or supervision.

Acknowledging Power Dynamics

Broaching helps recognize and address power dynamics and marginalization, fostering a supportive environment for clients or supervisees.

Broaching

"broaching" refers to the deliberate and direct way a therapist introduces and discusses topics related to race, ethnicity, culture, and other identity-related factors.



It's a technique used to build rapport, establish trust, and allow clients to explore how their cultural experiences and identities might be influencing their presenting issues.



Broaching involves acknowledging and explicitly addressing these factors, helping clients feel heard and understood, and fostering a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.

Effects of Broaching

Establishing rapport

Establishing counselor credibility

Acknowledging that difference may be an influence on the relationship

Giving permission to the client to comment on their experience of difference in the room

Giving permission to the client to discuss the effects of outside cultural forces

Enhances Counselor credibility & Client satisfaction

Depth of client disclosure

Clients' willingness to return for follow-up sessions (D. Sue & Sundberg, 1996)
Effects of broaching

Recommendations for counselors

- understanding how systemic oppression influences a client's experience; explicitly broaching and bridging **any** differences and potential misunderstanding; and including the impacts of **systemic oppression** as part of the therapeutic conversations, which may contribute to **building the therapeutic alliance with the client.**

Interventions



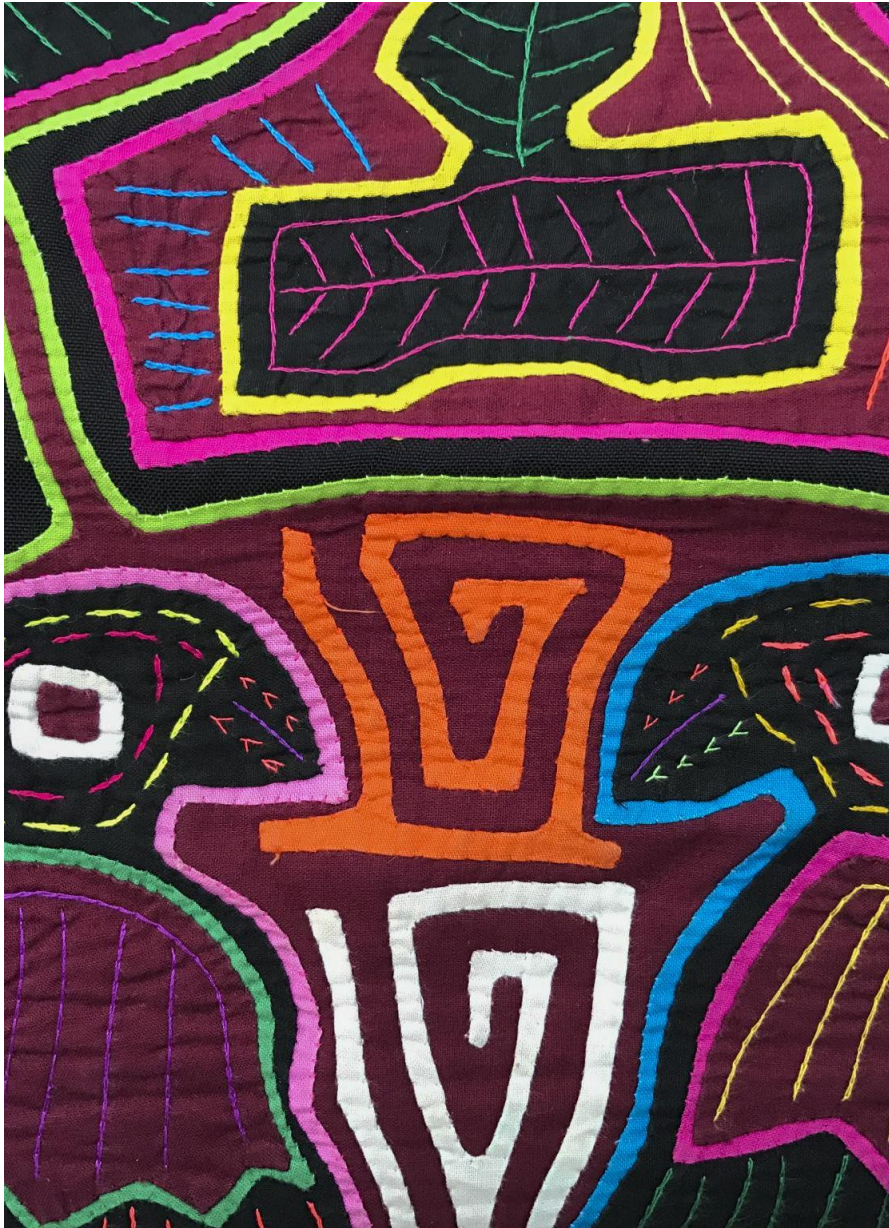
RESPECTFUL

RESPECTFUL Counseling and Therapy model



R	Religious and/or spiritual identity
E	Economic/class experiences and identity
S	Sexual/gender identity
P	Psychological maturity/development
E	Ethnic/racial/cultural identity
C	Chronological status and challenges
T	Traumatic experiences and other threats
F	Family history and identity
U	Unique physical characteristics
L	Location of residence and language Differences.

(D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001)



Incorporating Cultural Strengths and Resilience

Empowerment through Cultural Strengths

Recognizing cultural strengths in Black women can significantly empower their therapeutic journey and personal growth.

Celebrating Heritage

Celebrating the heritage of Black women fosters a positive therapeutic environment and enhances the therapeutic alliance.

Coping Strategies

Acknowledging and integrating unique coping strategies can enhance the therapy experience and outcomes for Black women.

Mental Health Interventions

Culturally Competent Therapy

Therapy that recognizes and integrates cultural experiences is crucial for effective mental health intervention for Black women.

Community Support Programs

Programs that provide community-based support can help Black women address social and economic challenges impacting their mental health.

Accessible Mental Health Services

Making mental health services more accessible ensures Black women can receive the necessary support tailored to their needs.

Creating Safe Spaces

Safe spaces allow Black women to discuss their experiences and receive support in a welcoming and understanding environment.



Self-Care and Empowerment for Black Women

Promoting Holistic Wellness



Physical Wellness

Physical wellness involves regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and adequate rest. These practices are essential for maintaining overall health and vitality.

Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness focuses on understanding and managing emotions effectively. Practicing mindfulness can enhance emotional resilience and well-being.

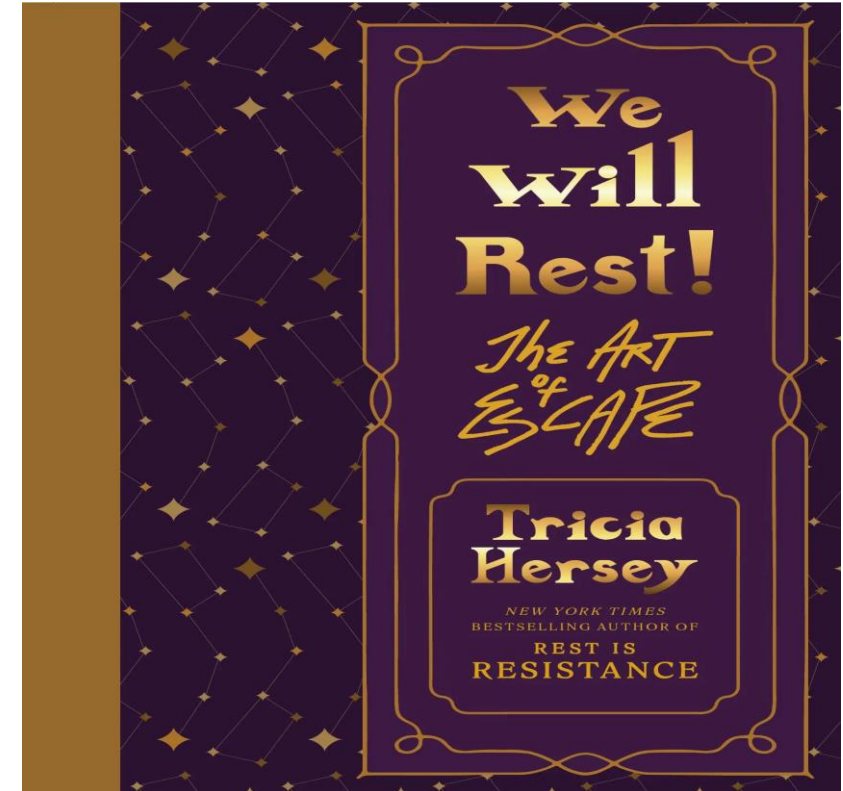
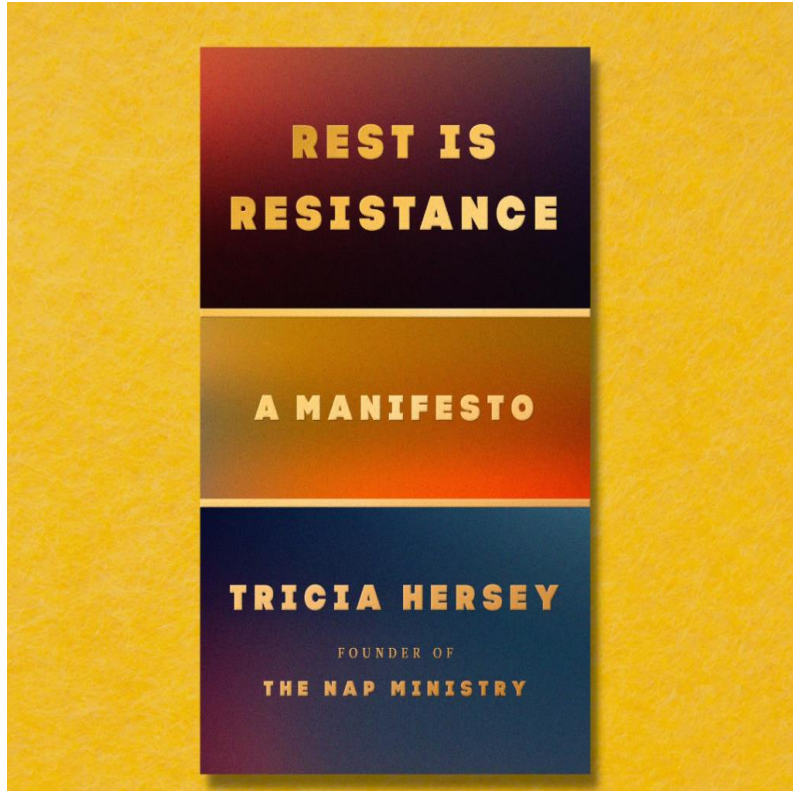
Spiritual Wellness

Spiritual wellness involves seeking purpose and meaning in life. This can include meditation, reflection, and connecting with nature.

Self-Care Practices

Self-care routines are vital for maintaining holistic wellness. This includes activities that nurture the body, mind, and spirit.

Tricia Herley – The Nap Ministry



Video of Trishan



Conclusion

Culturally Responsive Approach

Adopting a culturally responsive approach is essential for recognizing the unique challenges faced by Black women in mental health.

Addressing Systemic Issues

Addressing systemic issues can improve access to mental health care for Black women, thereby enhancing their well-being.

Empowerment and Support

Promoting empowerment and support for Black women can lead to better mental health outcomes and stronger community ties.