

Times of Adversity and What They Can Mean for Our Health

July 6, 2020

July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and while our country is learning of the staggering disparities made evident by COVID-19 and the communities it's disproportionately affecting, we are also witnessing BIPOC communities face two pandemics at once. The racial trauma and lack of resources many Black Americans confront on a daily basis can have not only a profound impact on their mental health and general safety, but on their physical health as well.

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, the first Surgeon General of California, has dedicated much of her work to examine this interplay found between mental, physical and environmental health factors. In a [2014 TED Talk](#), Dr. Harris speaks about the well-founded correlation between an individual's adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the bearing that can have on their eventual health outcomes. Studies performed by [the CDC and Kaiser Permanente](#), along with Dr. Harris' personal experience in treating and screening using ACE scores, points towards just how much adversity and toxic stress can affect neurological and physiological development, including the strength and efficacy of an individual's immune system.



Dr. Harris' area of expertise primes her to be an extremely valuable resource as these concurrent pandemics confront many Americans, young and old, today. Dr. Harris recently introduced the [CalHOPE Project](#) to provide mental health resources, information and guidance as we navigate the incredibly uncertain and stressful times that COVID-19 has ushered in. Within CalHOPE's resources is a [COVID-19 Stress Relief Playbook](#), outlining stress management tips and health insights to help bolster our mental, emotional and physical health. Among her recommendations, Dr. Harris points out how important keeping a routine, staying connected to our networks and spending time outside can be to help mitigate the profound stress many are understandably experiencing during this time.

For additional information on Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and related resources, you can visit [Mental Health America](#) and the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).



“There is nothing more important to true growth than realizing that you are not the voice of the mind—you are the one who hears it.”

Michael Singer, author of *The Untethered Soul*

Mindset

Setting out to master our mindsets can certainly feel like a daunting task. James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, writes extensively on enhancing one's mindset through the intentional building of new habits and the breaking of old, outdated ones. Learning just how much our emotions influence our behavior can be incredibly illuminating as we navigate our days, dynamic emotional demands and all that we expect ourselves to accomplish in a day's time. It also doesn't hurt to hear just how large an impact small changes can make.

Meditation

Similar to keeping a gratitude journal, practicing loving kindness, or metta, meditation can strengthen the areas of our brains responsible for empathy, gratitude and emotional intelligence. Deepak Chopra speaks highly of this meditation method's ability to help cultivate our compassion for others and the benefits it can even have in times of personal suffering. Spending a few moments of our day quietly visualizing and sending loving kindness to others can actually help in extending that same compassion to ourselves.

Meals

In times of worry and stress it's incredibly easy to reach for the sweetest option available. But as many of us may already know, sugar is not always our friend nor is it a good friend to our immune systems. As we look to bolster our immunity during this time and provide our bodies with the most nourishing fuel, redirecting our gaze to fruit-sweetened drinks and snacks can really make a world of a difference.

Let's Talk

It's becoming increasingly clear just how large a role our mental health plays into our physical health and how profound it can be to share our experiences with one another. Talkspace is a virtual platform, equipped with licensed therapists, that strives to bring affordability and accessibility into the mental healthcare field. With unlimited messaging options and 24/7 access, Talkspace is helping us help one another big time.

