

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month. The theme for February is Black History month and the topic is mental health in the black community. To be featured in this series please reach out to Pamela Alvarez or Alexandria Donkor.

Student Village Residents

Thoughts on mental health stigma in the black community



Background: A throwback to pre COVID days the Student Village classroom packed with residents. This particular event was our classic hit, Grocery Bingo!

STIGMA IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY (MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS)

Research has found that the Black community has a high degree of stigma associated with mental illness. In the 1990s, a public opinion poll found that 63% of African Americans believed depression was a personal weakness and only 31% believed it was a health problem. This is something that has been passed in the community for generations, I am sure we have all heard our parents or another family member talk about some girl/guy that was so “Crazy” that they had to hospitalized them, when in fact this person was just sad and depressed but in their eyes she was crazy because she sought for help.

In more recent generations it’s becoming less of a thing, people are being more open about their needs, and expressing their feelings and beliefs about important things like mental health. But there is still much more to work on, we have to break that stigma

and make sure people in our community are educated and aware that it is okay to seek for help, that they are not “Crazy or weak” for doing so. We all have to take care of ourselves and definitely go and do whatever we can to be better, your mental health is very important.

We asked Student Village residents what their thoughts are on this topic. Below are some of their responses.

BRIANNA G.

In my opinion most black people don’t really see mental health as an actual disability. They see it as a weakness. Even people outside of the black culture agree with the stigma that African Americans are stronger and have a higher pain tolerance

AMAYA R.

The stigma of health in the black community varies in so many different ways, it changes based on age to even gender for example I feel as if black females are ignored and pushed to the side when it comes to making complaints about personal health issues. Statistics even show that black women are at higher risk of dying at the hands of doctors than any other gender or race. I feel as if black health is not taken seriously enough in America and black Americans are seen more like a number rather than a human being.

MOSES G.

You mean how every form of mental illness is either ignored or used to shame people, it sucks. Or were you referring to the fact that therapy or any form of mental health that isn't prayer is frowned upon...

BRE'ANNA M.

It's not really talked about as if it is, it's usually associated with being weak or being “crazy “. Also a lot of black people don’t believe in therapy or outside sources for their mental health issues.

ANONYMOUS

If I'm being honest I think the black community has a stigma towards showing/acknowledging weakness or instability. Because of this notion that black people

need to be strong it's very common for people to use drugs or alcohol to mask their problems and not have to fully face it. Some people do try to healthily face mental health and illness but it is hard to keep up with therapy/treatment because it is a very vulnerable experience.