DYCD Mind & Body in CommUNITY: Empowerment Through Culture, Connection, & Care

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Our Conversational Direction



About Me

- •Executive Director, The HOPE Center Harlem
- •25+ years of direct clinical practice
- •Associate Professor Ichan School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai
- •Expertise in program planning & development, clinical service delivery, supervision, parenting & fatherhood
- •NYS Senate Women of Distinction Award in May 2024
- •Jospeh R. Biden Presidential Service and Lifetime Achievement Award in September 2023
- •2021 Mental Health Power 50 in New York City and State
- •NASW I.M.P.A.C.T. Award NASW-NYC's Highest Honor



I Am Also A

- NYC Native
- A Daughter of Harlem, NYC
- Raised in NYCHA
- Sister
- o BAE



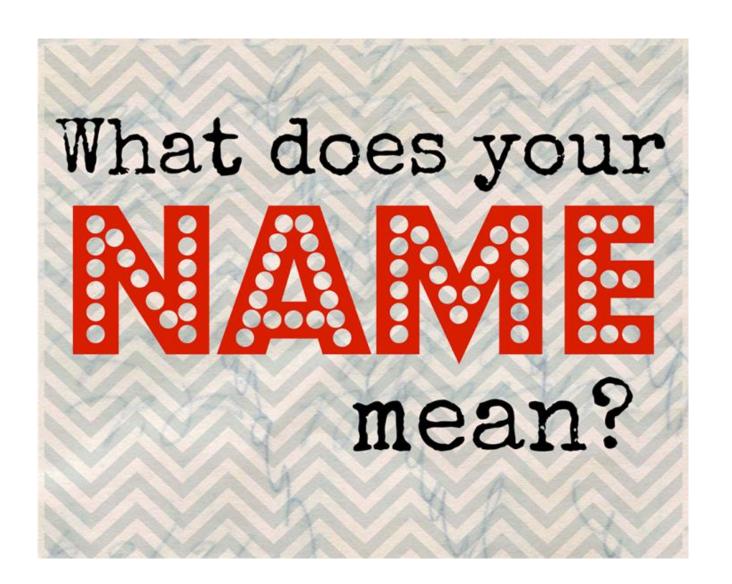






What's In A Name

What is the story behind your name?





What's in a Name?

What's In A Name Cont'd

- Names distinguish us as people
- There is story behind it
- Names have meaning
- What does a name symbolize?
- Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity
- They carry deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical connections
- They also give us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong, and our place in the world

Stories & Oral Traditions



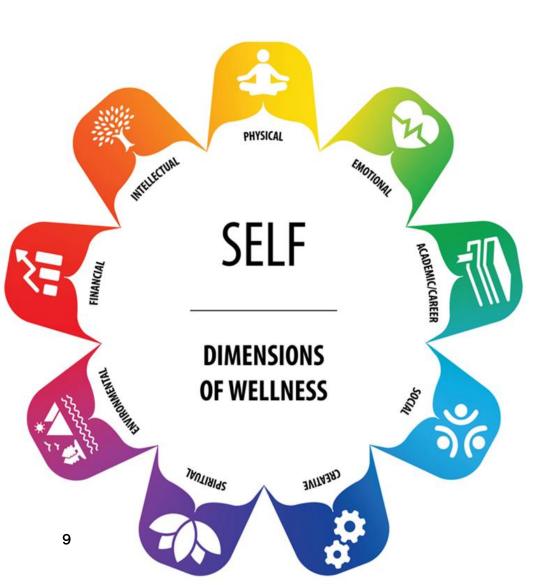
- Stories about mental health & health get passed down (stigma)
- What happened to us (individually & collectively)
- Who we can trust
- Where we can go (trusted places & spaces)



The Story Behind Our Mental Health

- Historical adversity, which includes slavery, sharecropping, and race-based exclusion from health, educational, social, and economic resources, translates into socioeconomic disparities experienced by Black people currently.
- Socioeconomic status, is linked to mental health outcomes- Poverty, homeless, incarceration, or at higher risk for poor mental health.
- Racism continues to have an impact on the mental health of Black and African American people.
- Negative stereotypes continue to exist, adverse consequences.
- Negative treatment of certain populations have led to a distrust of authorities, health systems not seen as having the best interests in mind.
- Resilience in the face of uncertainty and adversity

What Is Mental Health & Wellness



Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.

Mental health can change over time, depending on many factors.

Mental wellness is an active process, internal resource that helps us think feel, connect and function optimally.

Managing many life events and emotions with a sense of equilibrium.

World Health Organization <u>definition</u>: "A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Factors Impacting Mental Health



Factors Impacting Mental Health

- ☐ Cultural and societal narratives
- Bullying
- ☐ Invalidating environments
- Social media

☐ Food insecurity

☐ Environment (exposure to violence)

- ☐ Relationships (family, friends)
- ☐ Early sexual debut
- ☐ Trauma
- ☐ Family dysfunction
- ☐ Biology / genetics
- ☐ Poverty & financial stress
- Stigma



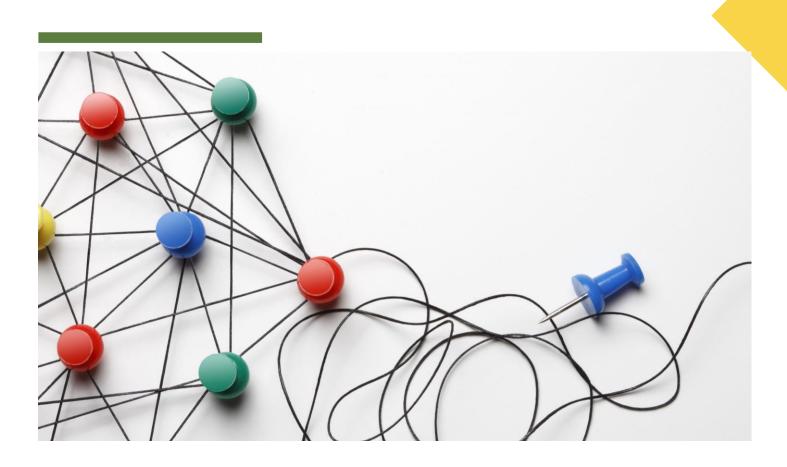
Stigma

- Characterized by shame, disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, attribute or condition.
- Includes negative assumptions, negative labels
- Assumes that a person is unable to contribute to society
- Calling someone crazy or weak, or dangerous
- Prevents people from seeking help
- Contributes to people suffering in silence, poor self-esteem.
- ¹² Can lead to isolation, feelings of hopelessness

Factors Impacting Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Culture: Culture is the set of beliefs, values, practices, and norms that characterize a group or society. Culture plays a significant role in shaping how people think and feel about their mental health. Can either be a source of strength or a source of stress.
- Access: Having access to care encompasses consistent availability, affordability and accessibility to health and mental health services. Includes health care delivery that is timely, high-quality, relevant and culturally inclusive.
- **Genomics (DNA):** Toxic and cumulative stress, through the genome can alter future generation's mental health. Genomic information can be sued to diagnose, predict and prevent and reverse disease / illness.
- Environment: Includes our neighborhoods and built environment. Transportation and walkability, Our ability to feel safe and free from harm; includes family, school, workspaces, green spaces, parks and recreational opportunities

Empowerment Starts With Connection



Mind, Body & Community

- Culture (shared values, traditions)
- Connection (relationships, belonging)
- Care (mutual support, access to healing)

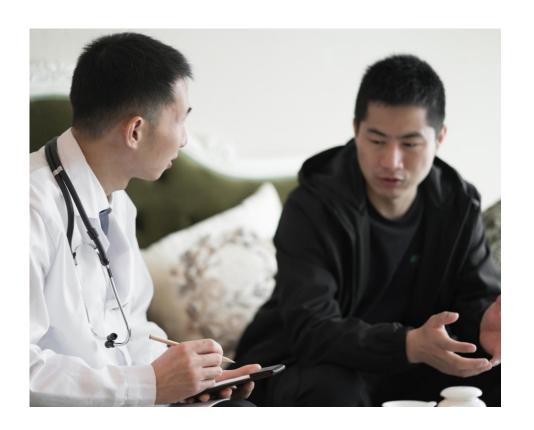
True wellness thrives at the intersection of who we are, who we're with, and what we come from.





Beyond the Individual: Wellness As A Whole-Being Experience

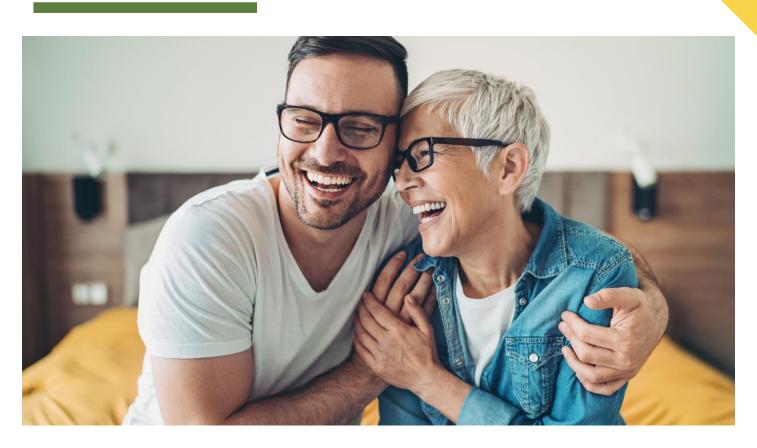




Holistic Wellness — The Mind-Body Connection

- Holistic Wellness: Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- The mind-body connection:
 - Stress & trauma affect physical health (e.g., hypertension, chronic pain)
 - Practices like mindfulness, yoga, and breathwork show how mental states affect bodily health.
- Somatic healing and embodied care.
- Systemic barriers (racism, poverty, discrimination) that fragment wellness.
- Healing must acknowledge the whole person, not just symptoms.
- Audience Reflection: What practices help you feel whole—mind and body?

Healing in Community: We Are Not Meant To Do This Alone





What Is A Community?

How Do You Build A Community?

What Is A Community?

- Place
- Population
- Political system
- Social organization
- Cultural system
- Social Unit

- A unified body of individual
- A group of people who share common characteristics, interests, or experiences, and often interact with each other.
- Communities can be defined by a shared place, such as a neighborhood, town, or country, or by a shared set of characteristics, such as values, culture, religion, or identity.
- A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.

Community Support & Culturally Responsive Healing

The **Power Of Community** In Healing:

- Social connection reduces anxiety and boosts resilience
- Intergenerational wisdom and mutual aid foster hope and identity

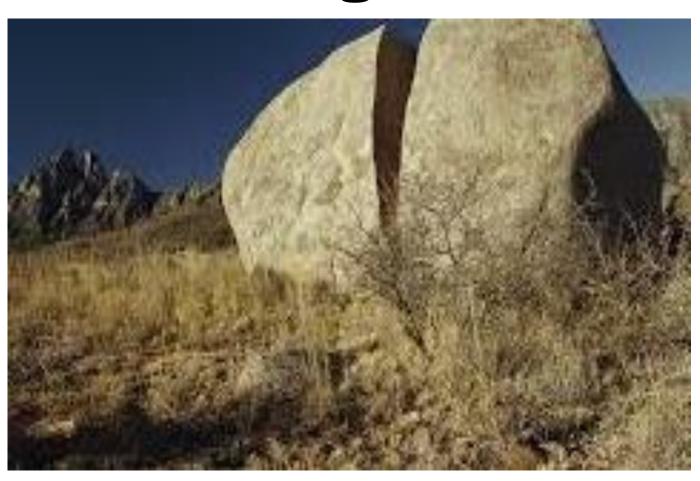
Culturally Responsive Care:

- Healing that reflects people's lived experiences and cultural traditions.
- Examples:
 - Indigenous talking circles
 - Black church-based health programs
 - Asian mindfulness and movement traditions
 - Latinx community curanderismo and storytelling
- Importance of language, values, & cultural safety in mental and physical healthcare

Empowerment Through Care



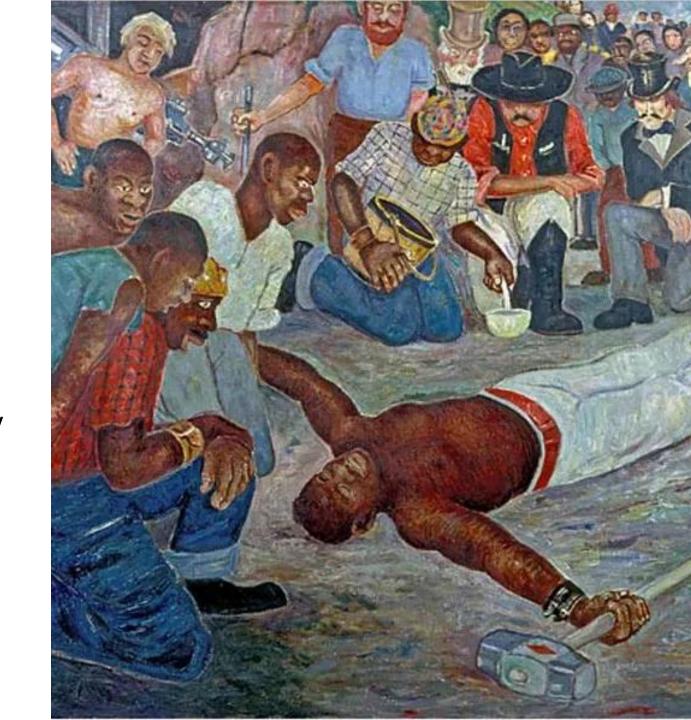
Weathering



- Dr. Arline Geronimus, a public health researcher at the University of Michigan, coined the term "weathering" in 1992.
- The notion that chronic stress that can lead to poor mental and physical health. Repeated exposure to discrimination, poverty, and other stressors can damage the body over time.
- Repeated exposure to socioeconomic adversity, political marginalization, racism, and perpetual discrimination can harm health.

John Henryism

- A term used to describe a coping style characterized by persistent hard work, perseverance, and a strong belief in one's ability to overcome adversity.
- When people face prolonged adversity especially in the face of inequality, financial hardship and racial discrimination, the "higheffort coping" required to thrive and be successful will damage overall health through stress.



Super Woman, Super Man Complex

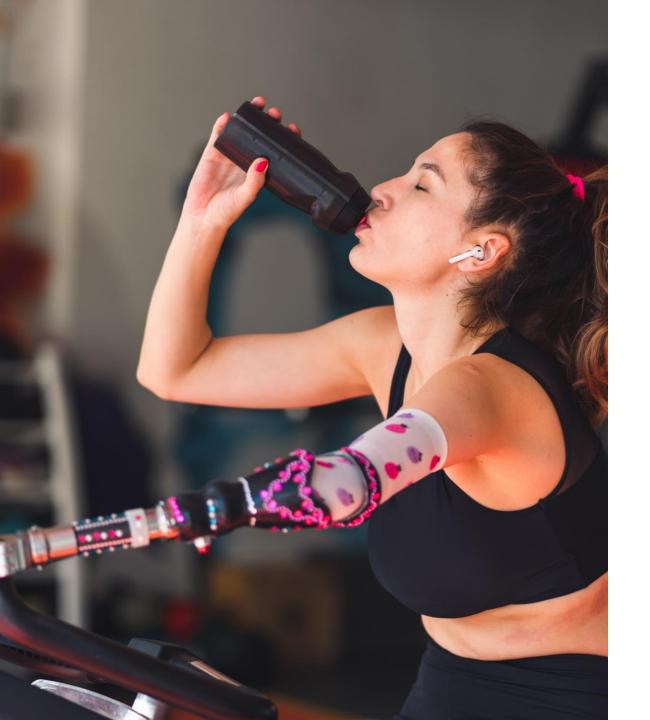


- Feeling obligated to appear strong
- Feeling obligated to help others
- Suppressing one's emotions
- Prioritizing caregiving over self-care
- Avoid being vulnerable or dependent on others
- Drive to succeed despite limited resources

Collective Mantra

When we heal together,

We rise together.



Strategies For Emotional Wellbeing & Resilience

Confidence-Building Strategies

Building Well-being & Resilience In Communities:



- Resilience: The ability to bounce back from adversity and continue thriving in the face of challenges.
- Building Community: We need connection to others, we heal in community, not isolation, support groups, sense of belonging
- Education: Understanding history, collective experiences, impact of adversity & overcoming
- Self-Care: Emotional, physical, financial wellbeing practices, boundaries, professional, social
- Advocacy: Sense of purpose, skills and growth around change and activism, policies, community interests, service



Healing Practices For Communities

Healing Strategies

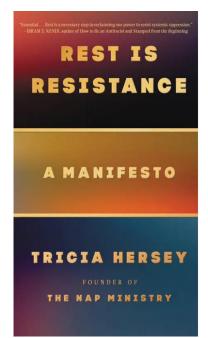
Healing Practices (ever evolving)

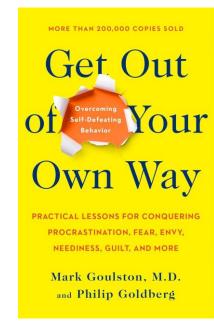
- ✓ Therapy
- ✓ Restorative Justice
- ✓ Exercise & Movement
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Community Engagement
- ✓ Journaling
- ✓ Laughing
- ✓ Message

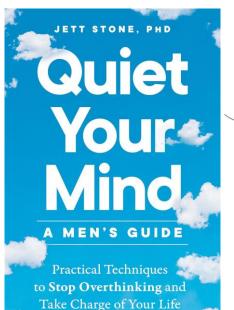
- ✓ Deep Breathing Exercises (Breathwork)
- ✓ Water Activities
- ✓ Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- ✓ Guided Imagery Relaxation
- ✓ Listening to Music
- ✓ Nature Walks, Spending Time Outdoors
- ✓ Aromatherapy
- ✓ Watching a Good Movie or TV Series

Book Recommendations

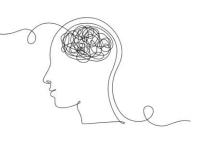
- Don't Believe Everything You Think: Why Your Thinking Is The Beginning & End Of Suffering ~ Joseph Nguyen
- Rest Is Resistance ~ Tricia Hersey
- Quiet Your Mind ~ Jett Stone
- Get Out Of Your Own Way~ Mark Goulston & Phillip Golsberg







DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK



WHY YOUR THINKING IS THE BEGINNING & END OF SUFFERING

JOSEPH NGUYEN

Wellness is not individual — It is cultural, connected, & communal

Encourage personal and collective practices:

- •Engage in healing spaces that honor your culture.
- Support or create inclusive and responsive programs and services
- •Build networks of mutual care—at home, work, school.

Audience Reflection:

•How will you bring more care, connection, and culture into your healing journey—or support it for others?

Culture is not just what we inherit—it's how we heal!

Precious Resource







Audience Reflection:

- ☐ I Am Worthy of Care
- ☐ I Am Worthy of Community
- ☐ I Am Worthy of Connection
- I Am The Most Precious Resource!

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Thank you!

Q & A

