

Community Health Coalition, Inc.



Healthy People  
2020

Improving the health of Durham  
& NC communities since 1989

Community Health Coalition, Inc.

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Date: December 28, 2014

## Healthy Sunday Topic: Bridging Barriers to Mental Health

Chronic depression affects Black people more than any other group, yet the discussion surrounding mental health remains largely absent in the African American community because of the deeply-rooted stigma surrounding mental illness. In addition, mental illness remains largely untreated often due to lack of resources and accessibility, lack of understanding about cultural triggers, mistrust of white doctors, concern over reactions from family and friends, and lack of information.



While some in the African American community struggle with mental illness in silence or find solace in family, many others rely solely on faith and prayer as a solution. Mental health experts believe that while religion can be a place of spiritual refuge and offer some piece of mind, using it instead of seeking a mental health professional undermines the need for proper diagnoses and care, as there are some traumas that require specialized help.

Dr. Carol Gibbs, a Durham private practice psychiatrist states, *“It is important that we become increasingly more sensitive to the issue of mental illness and proactive in discussions of mental health and wellness to ensure that those most vulnerable will have the help they need to survive. In addition, we should constantly be educating ourselves on mental health issues and encourage dialogue and treatment.”*



### Triggers for mental illness

- Illness
- Substance abuse addictions
- Lack of social support
- Unwillingness to seek help due to fear
- Loss of a loved one
- PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) - from having served in the armed forces or some other event.

### In a Crisis Situation

Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
24 hour crisis center

Call Durham Center Access  
919-560-7100 or  
800-510-9132

### Barriers to the treatment of depression cited by African Americans included:

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Denial (40 percent)                              | ■ Embarrassment/shame (38 percent)  |
| ■ Don't want/refuse help (31 percent)              | ■ Lack money/insurance (29 percent) |
| ■ Fear (17 percent)                                | ■ Hopeless (12 percent)             |
| ■ Lack knowledge of treatment/problem (17 percent) |                                     |

### What Can We Do?

- Finding out if the person is getting the care that he or she needs and wants—if not, connect him or her to help
- Expressing your concern and support
- Reminding your friend or family member that help is available and that mental health problem can be treated
- Asking questions, listening to ideas, and being responsive when the topic of mental health problems arises.
- Reassuring your friend or family member that you care about him or her
- Including your friend or family member in your plans—continue to invite him or her without being overbearing, even if your friend or family member resists your invitations
- Educating other people so they understand the facts about mental health problems and do not discriminate
- Treating people with mental health problems with respect, compassion, and empathy. By giving, you receive.

### REMEMBER

Always exercise regularly as this may help in minimizing stress, **B**e willing to seek professional help, and **C**ontrol your stress and anxiety by talking to someone, breathing deeply, laughing, and meditating.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Mental Health America Resource Center at (800) 969-6642

Nat'l Institute of Mental Health Info Ctr at (866) 615-6464 or [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

M-F 9am to 5pm

M-F 8:30am to 5pm

Health Tip is a message from Community Health Coalition, Inc. and is written in partnership with Durham Academy of Medicine, Dentistry & Pharmacy, Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc., The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity, and Duke Regional Hospital.

*REMEMBER Healthy People 2020: A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!*