Asian American Mental Health Awareness

Mental health conditions do not discriminate based on race, color, gender or identity. Anyone can experience the challenges of mental illness regardless of their background. The National Alliance on Mental Illness warns, however, that background and identity can make access to mental health treatment much more difficult, especially during times of crisis.

For Asian Americans, there are several roadblocks to seeking help from mental health professionals, including language barriers, stigma, and lack of awareness of resources and mental health services. Studies show that Asian Americans are three times less likely than their Caucasian counterparts to seek treatment for their mental health concerns. Many indicated that they avoid seeking treatment or utilizing mental health services because doing so would admit the existence of a mental health disorder, and in turn would bring shame to their family's name. Asian Americans also have the most difficulty accessing mental health treatment due to the language barrier.

Some stats from the American Psychiatric Association:

- 8.6 percent of Asian Americans seek mental health care, compared with 17.9 percent of the general population. Stigma may play an important role in willingness to access care.
- There are 50 distinct ethnic groups included in U.S. Asian American demographic reporting, stressing the heterogeneity of this population.
- Each Asian American group has its own history, language, culture, and health beliefs. Within each group, depending on geography, dialect, custom, and subculture, there are also subgroupings. For example, Southern Chinese from Canton speak Cantonese or Toisanese while Mainland Chinese speak Mandarin, and many Southeast Asian Chinese speak the Fookien dialect.

According to Mental Health America, many factors play into the lack of mental health care in these communities:

- Language barriers make it difficult for Asian Americans to access mental health services. Nearly 1 out of 2 Asian Americans will have difficulty accessing mental health treatment because they do not speak English or cannot find services that meet their language needs.
- Discussing mental health concerns is considered taboo in many Asian cultures. Because of this, Asian Americans tend to dismiss, deny, or neglect their symptoms.
- Lack of awareness of the resources and services that are available.
- Most young Asian Americans tend to seek out support from personal networks such as close friends, family members, and religious community members rather than seek professional help for their mental health concerns.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, many cultures, including those in the Asian American communities, also view mental health treatment as a luxury and consider symptoms a "phase" that will eventually pass. These harmful perceptions of mental illness can further isolate individuals who need help.

If you or someone you know needs counseling or other help, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

Asian American Mental Health Resources

Mental Health America provides the following mental health resources for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities:

- **Mental Health America.** Information on Asian American/Pacific Islander Communities and mental health.
- **Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA).** The AAPA is dedicated to advancing the mental health and well-being of Asian American communities through research, professional practice, education, and policy.
  - Fact Sheets
  - Bullying Awareness Campaign
  - LGBTQ+ Resources
- **Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum.** The forum is focused on improving the health of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.
- **Asian American Health Initiative.** The Montgomery County Dept. of Health and Human Services' initiative offers general Asian American resources.

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- **National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association**
  - Directory of Mental Health Service Providers for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (by state)
  - Combatting Racism Resources
- **Southasiantherapists.org.** Directory of South Asian therapists, including therapists of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Afghanistani and Nepali heritage.
- **Asian Mental Health Collective.** This group raises awareness about the importance of mental health care, promotes emotional well-being, and challenges the stigma concerning mental illness among Asian communities globally.
- **APIDA Therapist Directory**

Partnerships and Resources

- Mental Health Screening Resources
- National Asian Women's Health Organization
- National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association

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