

## Where to get more support:

Call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **1-800-273-8255**. This is a free 24-hour hotline answered by the certified crisis center nearest to your area code. (Press 1 for a dedicated line for Veterans and their families.) The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has TTY capability, which can be accessed by calling **1-800-799-4TTY (4889)**.



If you have **health insurance**, call your insurance provider to find out what is covered and how to obtain a referral.

At work, ask your Human Resources Department if you have access to an **Employee Assistance Program** (sometimes called "EAP").

If you have Medi-Cal, contact the Behavioral Health Department in your county.

For emergency housing, food and other support, call 211 or visit **211.org**.



## Concerned about someone in your life but not sure what to do? Try taking these steps:

- 1. Find a time to talk privately.** Share why you are concerned. Let them know you respect them and have their best interest at heart. Tell them it is just between you and them. Ask questions that can't be answered with just yes or no. Really listen.
- 2. Offer hope, compassion and support.** Let them know that struggling with mental health happens all the time. Tell them people can and do recover. Learn more at [EachMindMatters.org](http://EachMindMatters.org).
- 3. Share information.** Tell them where to find help. Great places to start are county behavioral health departments, [MentalHealthAmerica.net](http://MentalHealthAmerica.net), and [NAMI.org](http://NAMI.org).
- 4. Follow-up.** Ask the person how you can help. Follow their lead about what is helpful.
- 5. Advocate for yourself, your family, and your loved ones** to get the best possible care.
- 6. To learn more about the signs of suicide**, how to talk to someone you are worried about and more visit [suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org).

## Words of encouragement:

We can show our love by empowering ourselves to try counseling, therapy, meditation or prayer when needed. We should talk about this because we are worthy enough to grow and develop in all areas of our lives. We should advocate this so we can connect with our true purpose and thrive.

"Anybody ever wonder/ when they would see the sun up/ just remember when you come up/ the show goes on!"  
—Lupe Fiasco

"We ain't meant to survive/ 'cause it's a set-up/ and even though you're fed up/ you got to keep your head up"  
—Tupac Shakur

"We're a community and it's important to ask for help when you need it."  
—Chamique Holdsclaw

"It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it."  
—Lena Horne

"There should be no shame in discussing or seeking help for treatable illnesses... We've got to get rid of that stigma."  
—President Barack Obama

"My brain and my heart are really important to me. I don't know why I wouldn't seek help to have those things be as healthy as my teeth. I go to the dentist. So why wouldn't I go to a shrink?"  
—Kerry Washington



Funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).



## Support Guide Mental Health in the African American Community



BE THE VOICE OF HOPE



**Good mental health** enables people to realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and have happy relationships with others.

The California Reducing Disparities Project Population Report states that living in America creates a situation where people of color are more likely to have mental, emotional and behavior issues. These can easily progress to other mental health challenges if not addressed.

Historically, enslavement, lack of economic opportunity, oppression and cultural bias have led to high poverty in our community. This leads to homelessness, incarceration and substance use problems, which increase the chances of poor mental health.

Even with progress over the years, racism still has an impact on the mental health of African Americans. Negative treatment has led to a mistrust of authorities and constant stress. Being around violence increases the chance of developing mental health conditions. These include depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Some symptoms are feelings of fear, anger, worthlessness and humiliation.



**African Americans are strong people and can recover from mental illness. With access to the right tools and treatment, between 70% and 90% of all individuals say they have reduced symptoms and improved quality of life.**

## Discrimination, shame, and the community

Some of the main reasons people don't reach out for help is because of shame and discrimination. People don't want to talk about how they feel because they don't want to be judged or for people to think they are weak. It's important to remember that mental health problems are common - in fact, 50% of adults in the U.S. will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime.

Luckily, everyone can help create more open, supportive communities. Simply start talking about mental health in your daily life.

### Other ways to create supportive communities:

- Develop neighborhood healing circles.
- Raise awareness through advocacy, leadership and collaboration.
- Keep places of worship open every day of the week. This creates safe places for people to gather and talk.
- Wear lime green, the national color for mental health awareness. Share why mental health matters to you.
- Share videos, blogs, or photos from [eachmindmatters.org](http://eachmindmatters.org) on Facebook or Twitter to get your friends talking.



## Suicide in the African American community

At the heart of suicidal behavior is often a sense of hopelessness and being a burden to others. When we are hurting, we want to end the pain and feel that our death has more value than our life.

### There are several warning signs to be aware of if you are worried about a friend or loved one:

- Hopelessness
- Seeking a means to kill oneself, by putting themselves in high risk situations (e.g. suicide by cop, reckless driving)
- Increasing alcohol or drug use, self-medicating
- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself
- Dramatic mood changes

Suicide risk is increased if more than one warning sign is present. Risk also increases with a "triggering" event that leads to shame or despair, such as relationship problems, problems at work, financial hardship, legal difficulties or worsening health.

It is important to note that although suicide rates in the African American community are lower than the overall U.S. rates, suicide affects African American youth at a much higher rate than African American adults. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among African Americans ages 15-24.

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255**. If you would like to learn more about the warning signs of suicide, visit [suicideispreventable.org](http://suicideispreventable.org).

## Here are some simple things everyone can do to boost mental health and wellness:

**Love and respect yourself.** Look in the mirror each morning and say, "I love you."

**Eat healthy foods.** Drink plenty of water. Be active every day and get plenty of sleep.

**Maintain a positive, healthy relationship** with family and friends daily.

**Love black people and black culture.** Be black and proud!

**Be aware of your own thinking.** Are your thoughts negative? What can you do to think positive?

**Know who to contact when you have been marginalized,** such as the NAACP.

**Find a way to unplug and relax.** Meditate, pray, read scriptures/affirmations, journal, listen to inspirational music, take a walk or play games.

**Become involved in the decision making process** that helps better your community's mental health needs.

**Avoid negative environments and people.**

**Talk to people!** Reach out to family, friends, place of worship, community center, a counselor or anyone you can trust to speak truthfully with.