



# HELPFUL LIVING

MAGAZINE

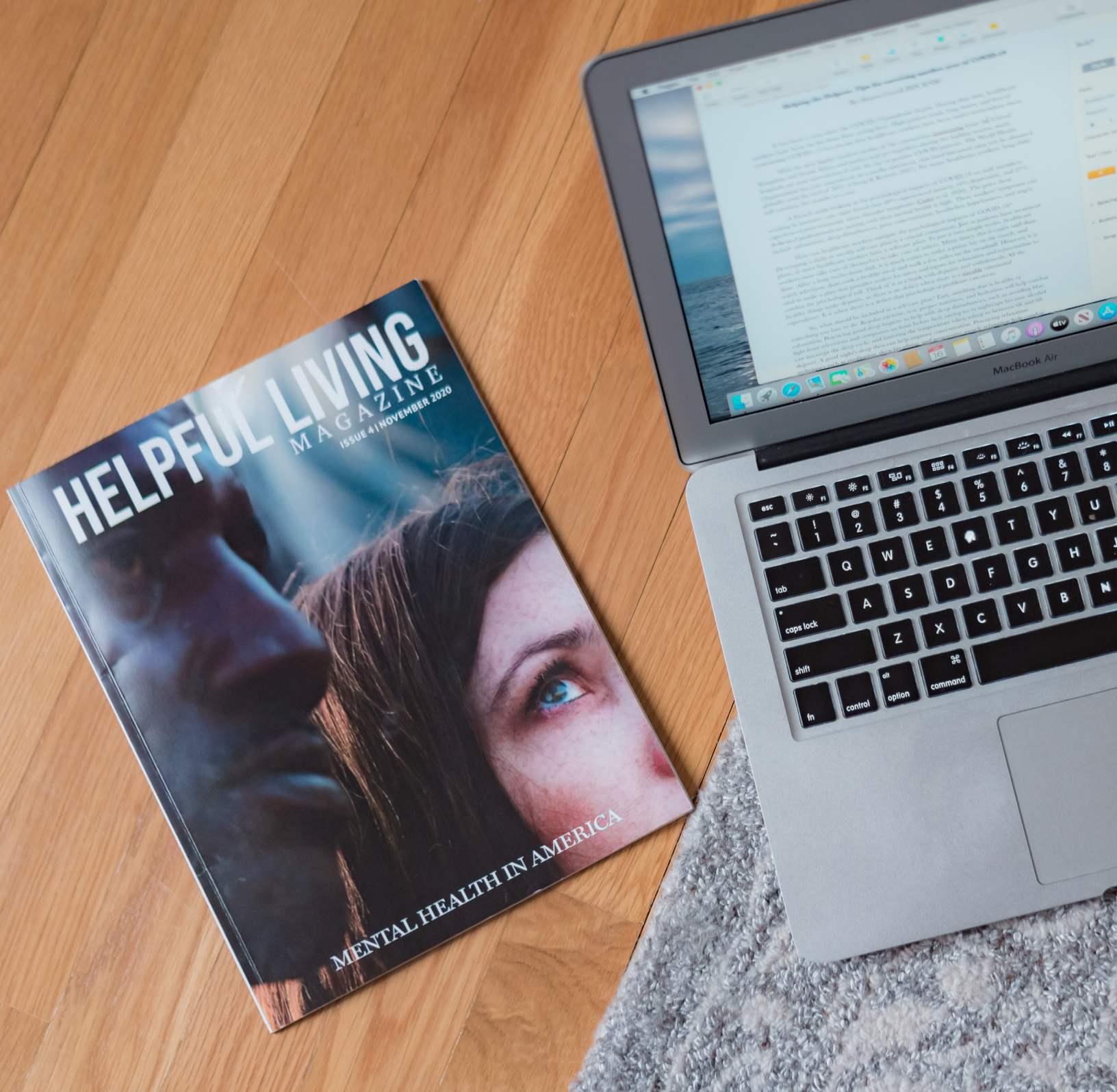


## YOUR FEELINGS MATTER

ENDING THE STIGMA ONE ISSUE AT A TIME

MAY 2023 ISSUE XIV





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**Disclaimer:** Helpful Living Magazine does not take the place of therapy or any mental health services. Some articles and stories may be triggering. If you or someone you know has a mental health emergency please call 911 or go to your local emergency room.



# 6 SIGNS YOU NEED A MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Restless

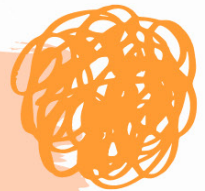
Easily Irritable

Low Mood



Overwhelmed

Disengaged



Scattered Thoughts



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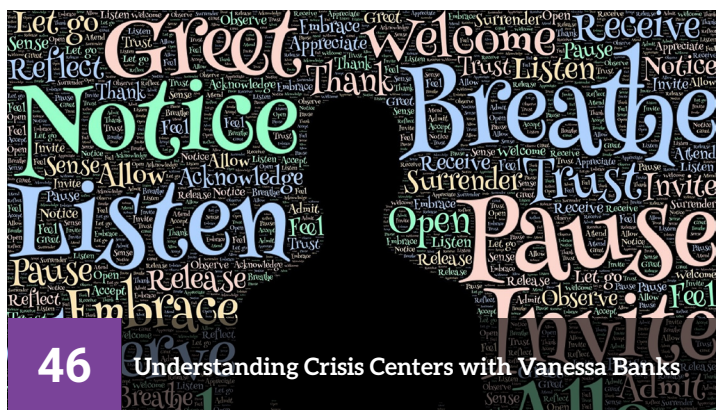
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# LETTER FROM THE **FOUNDER**

**W**hen was the last time you put yourself on the schedule? Like seriously, put everything on halt for a day or a weekend to attend to your health and wellness? If you are like many busy parents or young adults, you probably cannot recall the last time you had a moment to yourself. Life be life'n and with all the busy schedules and high demands, putting yourself on the schedule can only get harder as you get older. Spending time alone is one of many things you ought to make a priority.

There are always reminders of how you can improve in something the moment you log onto social media. Each day I see ads for flatter tummies, hair growth, and clearer skin, which is a reminder to me that I want to change something about myself. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but when you start to see products back to back, you start to fall into the trap of wanting to FIX yourself at least that's the case for me. We often want instant gratification and in all reality that is not how the world works. It's nice to see a reel or Tik-Tok of someone's success in a fast motion, however we attend to forget the challenges one faced to get the end result we see on social media. I wanted to point this out to anyone who feels as if they are stuck at some point in their life, despite what it is, I want you to know this... YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

One thing I want you to take in while you're reading through this magazine issue is this: ACCOUNTABILITY. In order to heal or grow it's important to acknowledge your part. What role did you play in the distant relationship you have with that family member or friend? How can you be accommodating or what challenges do you face when it comes to communication? We all have something we have to work on, and in the spirit of mental health awareness month, I want you to live a healthy and whole life, spiritually, physically, and mentally. Enjoy reading topics about relationships, understanding ways to pay for therapy, learning about burnout and what you can do about it.

We are also featuring our self-care boxes, a product you can use to engage in self-care practices independently. Be sure to check it out along with other wellness activities we have for you inside. I know this magazine issue is going to help you obtain some clarity about mental health. I am excited for your growth and be sure to know, I am rooting for you.



*Jamie Rockymore-Bess*  
Founder, Helpful Living Magazine

Helpful Living Magazine displays articles and stories from the perspectives of the writer. They are used for advice and not for the primary use of treatment. Stock photos are from Belle Imagery Portraits, Canva, Freepik.com Pixabay, Shutterstock, & Unsplash. Logo created by Passion Designzz



# THE ARTIST ON THE COVER

**S**herita T. Sparrow is a Wilmington, Delaware native who has been inspired by art since the tender age of five. Throughout grade school, she cultivated her talent and earned a Bachelors of Science Degree in Art from Towson University and a Graphic Design Degree from Delaware College of Art & Design. Shortly afterwards, she founded The Feather's Touch, LLC a holistic art company that uses art to heal the world emotionally and spiritually so that it's a much better place. Initially, services focused on using art holistically to enhance the quality of life of elders living in nursing homes.



Now, services extend to empowering the youth. Sherita teaches 11-18-year-olds how to share their voice confidently and see the beauty within themselves through art. When days are quiet and warm, Sherita enjoys sitting outside to create mixed media art with acrylics, chalk pastels, and magazine clippings on canvas. Through her art, she explores what the world is missing amidst mistrust, racism, and ambiguity and seeks to fill this void. It is her hope that viewers of her work walk away feeling uplifted and inspired to contribute to something greater than themselves. As she states, "My journey certainly has had a few series of events that tested my faith. Yet, art offers me a sense of hope and harmony when facing difficult times. It is through art that I find balance in all of it, and this is what I strive to help others to find, too." Go to [www.thefeatherstouch.com](http://www.thefeatherstouch.com) to learn more about the creative services available to you!

## PAINTING SYMBOLISM FOR *Healing Just Ahead*



*Sherita T. Sparrow, The Healing Artist*  
16x20 Acrylic on Canvas



*Bench symbolizes  
Loneliness & Hopeless*



*Water symbolizes  
Feelings & Emotions*



*Anchor symbolizes  
Feeling Stuck*



*Pelican symbolizes  
Healing & Renewal*

### Painting Description:

"Healing Just Ahead" is a 16 x 20 acrylic painting of an empty park bench floating in the middle of the ocean. The bench represents a sense of loneliness and hopelessness. The untamed ocean embodies years of suppressed thoughts and trauma that keeps one anchored in an emotional storm. Yet, the road ahead shows us that a brighter future awaits. And Helpful Living Magazine (characterized by the pelican) is here to support you on the path toward healing and greater peace of mind.

### I challenge you to...

Take time to absorb the vivid colors, shapes, and symbols of the painting. What does it convey to you? In what way do you choose to face hardship and show yourself love when "life" happens?

**"Our greatest personal fulfillment comes when we contribute to improving the lives of others."**

— Gayle Lynn Goodwin



# JOKER

By Steven D. Kish

My sinister chuckles are heard by everyone.... Ha-ha-ha.

I am the Joker; I'm surrounded by my 52 friends.

Sometimes I'm there to shake things up, which I always  
do.

Other times I'm there to be wild, which I was born to do.

I am unpredictable and come out of nowhere.

Sometimes I'm not even in the game.

Remember, I am the Joker.

I can blend in with my friends and pretend to be someone  
else.

I stroke your ego and can be whoever you want me to be.

If you want, I can make the game more serious.

I can make it more fun.

Ha-ha-ha.... I'm not laughing at you.

Just the opposite.

You're laughing at me!

The reality of my life is the hidden joke.

Most of the time, I'm not even in the game.

I live a life of isolation, rarely seeing the light of day.

I find myself stuck in my bicycle box, begging to be thrown  
into the game.

Am I really wild or just depraved?

I've heard the names I've been called: uncontrollable,  
chaotic, and untamed.

Why am I so unwanted?

Is it because I yell and always catch you off guard?

I was born into chaos, and chaos is my destiny.

Think about it...Maybe it's you or my 52 friends who are  
the real Jokers.

I accept what I am, but why am I the one who must be  
alone?

Just because I am a standout, it doesn't mean I like it.

Do you play with me for your amusement, or am I just a  
sick joke?



Steven Dee Kish is an internationally published poet with over thirty poems published in Australia, UK, India, and the United States. His writing shows what life is like when someone lives on the razor edge of life. In life, there are times when one needs to address the elephant in the room, and Steven's writing gives the reader a glimpse into that process. Steven bears his soul and hopes to provide hope to those hurting. Steven is passionate about mental health and is the senior editor for the arts and culture section of a mental health website called Gainlove.life. Steven loves the spoken word, and his YouTube channel: Address the elephant in the room poems gives the audience a visual to complement his powerful spoken word.





# TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY: A BRIEF LOOK INTO THE COST OF THERAPY

By Ashley D. Gilmore, LCMHC

*An anonymous social media post:*

**Her:** "The cost of therapy should not create more anxiety."

**Them:** "Right. Because they are tripping with these prices!"

On social media, there often seems to be a debate on why mental health services are so expensive. Many tweets, memes, and posts give opinions and thoughts on the unaffordability of therapy.

As a therapist- these feelings always beg the question..well- how am I supposed to feed my family if I only charge \$50 per session when gas prices are \$3.39 per gallon, insurance rates are rising and Twitter is now charging me for my verified blue check (I don't have one, but you get the idea). I think it is important to break the down the cost of therapy and provide support around your investment in therapeutic services.

Ok. Here goes.

Before your therapist became your mental health provider, they were a student obtaining a master's degree in the counseling or social work field. Their degree most likely cost them \$70-\$90,000 for three years. During their program, most soon-to-be-therapists must participate in an unpaid practicum and internship experience to become qualified to practice in the state for which they desire to work. This often comes prevents the student from being able to work full-time, therefore reducing any income they could be receiving. And then... they graduate! Yay! However, in order to become a licensed



(insert their respective mental health provider title here), they must sit for at least one qualifying exam. There is limited research on the complete cost of preparation and fees affiliated with the exams but it is safe to say that for many national examinations, the costs range from \$275 to \$485. Per exam. If your mental health provider is successful in passing their exam, they then must submit an application packet to their state board which totals approximately \$375. This is a rough estimate and varies per state, based on the documents needed. After passing their exam and being licensed in their state, your mental health provider then must have annual malpractice insurance and participate in continuing education classes to maintain their license and to keep up with current research so that they are better equipped to serve you.

Whew! Is it safe to say you may have a better understanding of why your mental health may charge over \$100 for their time? The cost of therapy may seem expensive, but at what cost to the mental health provider?

According to the Market Intelligence Report (2020), spending for mental health services in the United States has increased by 52.1% which means that services are indeed becoming more costly for those needing therapy. One solution I encourage is for clients (or potential clients) to learn about their health care insurance and the benefits of health services as a way to make therapy more cost effective. The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) is a federal law that prohibits insurance companies from limiting mental health services. What is difficult, is that insurance is a tricky game and sets their priorities on the money, not the service or care provided. Insurance companies often do not make it easy for the mental health provider or the client. And because of this,

some mental health providers offer a sliding scale that may accommodate your budget. If you are struggling to pay for your mental health services, be sure to voice that- your mental health provider is human and empathizes with you.

**Here is your take away:** Mental health providers are people too and must sustain themselves, save some money and pay back student loans. We are also health care providers. Not doctors however, but our skill and care for our clients saves lives the same. Either way, your investment in your mental health (emotionally and financially) is a priority!

## About Ashley D. Gilmore, LCMHC:



Ashley is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and National Board-Certified Counselor. She is the founder of Gilmore Counseling and Consulting Services, PLLC. Ashley works to educate, inspire and elevate individuals, families, groups and organizations toward emotional and mental wellness. She has obtained degrees from Purdue, Indiana and Capella University. She is a wife and mother, an advocate for self-care and the uplifting of the African American Community.



# A MATERNAL MOTHERS BOND

With Tamara Mackroy

**T**amara (Tam) Mackroy is an advocate, public speaker, and a change agent missionary. She is known for being a headstrong transaction strategy and execution leader in the Central Florida community with ties across the United States. Tam holds multiple degrees, with the highest being her MS in Human Services with a Concentration in Social Policy, Analysis and Planning. She is certified in Project Management Essentials and is Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt certified. Tam also holds certificates in Case Management services, Co-Occurring Disorders and is working her way through an Addiction Counseling program.

Tam is the owner and Chief Program Project Management Consultant for Management and Consultative Favor, LLC. In her role, she works with Human Services across the country in helping them develop and implement strengthened business operations to further push their organizational missions of being able to help those living in local neighborhoods. She is the Founder and President of Maternal Matters Favored, a 501c3 organization. The mission is to provide support services to women that are suffering from reproductive health issues and or perinatal/postpartum depression and or anxiety.

Lastly, she is Principal Partner and CEO of Favorable Human Services Solutions. This agency was created

specifically to aid those who are released from jail and or prison obtain services that serve as a catalyst to re-entering society. Services include mental health and substance use counseling, job

assistance, financial literacy, and housing identification to name a few. As a Principal Partner and the Chief Compliance Officer of Nasir Logistics Dispatching, Tam works with the other C-Level leaders to ensure that the nationwide supply chain management operations for Owners and Truckers alike, are efficiently carried out.

**“First time parents should remember to breathe!”**

*Tamara Mackroy*

**HL: Becoming a first time parent has its challenges. What advice do you have for mothers who are bearing children for the first time?**

**TM:** First time parents should remember to breathe! We are not super-humans. It's important to provide the basics to a child and to take what little time that can be salvaged during the day/week for self. If possible to resource family, friends and community programs that will serve as a go-to for being able to catch up on sleep, cleaning, etc. During prenatal appointments, they should ask if there are Doula services available that they qualify for and or if there's a program that offers it.

**HL: What are common challenges mothers with multiple children face during the postpartum stage?**

**TM:** Most mothers/non birthing parents with multiple children tend to go through high levels of anxiety, depression and even OCD. Statistics show that parenting multiple children can lead to minimal



# Favored

or no personal time, constant tiredness, and irritability. The numbers are higher depending on the socio-economic level of the household.

**“In these present days and times, parents should not feel like asking for help is a burden.”**

*Tamara Mackroy*

**HL: Asking for help can be difficult, how can mothers ask for help without feeling like a burden?**

**TM:** In these present days and times, parents should not feel like asking for help is a burden. Societal norms have placed high expectations on mothers specifically to be in control of their emotions, nurture a child, and contribute to the household's stability. When the burdens of these 3 elements are off kilter society will eventually reap the emotions that were internalized by the parent. Meaning, a parent may fall prey to mental health disorders, substance use, raise a child who is traumatized and who may even repeat generational dysfunctionalities; and so much more.

**HL: What encouragement do you have for mothers who feel they have no one to help them?**

**TM:** Reach out to someone they trust to let them know how they are feeling, what they are going through and to ask for help. Ailments of perinatal and postpartum mood disorders if not treated can spiral into depths of turmoil.

**“It's very important for folks to be in support groups,”**

*- Tamara Mackroy*

**HL: How important is it to join a support group, what are some of the benefits?**

**TM:** It's very important for folks to be in support groups. We as humans need a tribe we can offload life's challenges with. There has been great success with support groups as seen through AA/NA groups, grief support groups, and even caregiver support groups. The goal of support groups is to help a person cope. Being able to navigate parenthood and life is a lot and parents should know that they do not have to stuff their emotions in.

**HL: What inspired Maternal Mothers Favored?**

**TM:** In 2002 I went through perinatal anxiety that spiraled into postpartum anxiety and depression. Back then conversations about how I was psychologically coping with becoming a new parent, my home life, etc. was not a thing. Not for a person of color. Postpartum anxiety and depression lead me to a life of drugs, prostituting, being in and out of rehabs and jails. It took several years before I was able to reestablish myself in society, regain custody of my son, and reinvent myself.

**HL: What are some accomplishments you have achieved since starting Maternal Mothers Favored?**

**TM:** In December of 2022 we were awarded a scholarship for the National Non Profit Resource Center's Heroes Program. Through this program I am able to connect with other nonprofit organizations as we learn how to build our programs' capacity,

create Board development opportunities, and seek donors to say the least.

We were recently added to the directory for Orlando Health-South Seminole Behavioral Health unit's resource list as an organization for those who are released from being Baker-Acted and were diagnosed with a perinatal or postpartum mood disorder. We have a continued partnership with the Eatonville Chamber of Commerce that sponsored our incorporation and we were just added to PSI's Peer Consultation Groups directory. We are working on being added to NAMI's resource directory to be a staple in the Black and Brown community that is combating perinatal and postpartum mood disorders.

**Mental Moment:** There's no manual to parenting. All we can do is live life 1 day at a time!

## About Tamara Mackroy:



Tamara is a member of the Seminole County Chapter for the NAACP and newly elected Prison Committee Chair. She is a Women Empowerment Specialist for Wombiversity. She is a member of the FL Rising-State Leadership Council and the Eatonville Chamber of Commerce. Tamara is a Central FL Legislative Liaison for the National Alopecia Areata Foundation and a Board Member for the Central FL Alopecia Support Group. She is a Board of Directors member and the Governance Committee Chair for the Center for Independent Living. She is a Mentor for Postpartum Support International and is a Peer Specialist. Tamara sat on the SemDems Diversity Inclusion Committee and is their Outgoing Secretary. She is the Past President for the National Organization for Women-Seminole County Chapter and the Past Co-Chair, for the Alzheimer's Association (Central & North Florida Chapter) The Longest Day Committee.





## DO YOU WANT TO ENGAGE IN SELF-CARE BUT HAVE NO IDEA ON WHAT TO DO?

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Explore creating a vision for your mental health by getting creative with your toolkit. Enjoy the activities with friends or independently with music to get your creative mind flowing.

Order your toolkit today at [HelpfulLivingMag.com](https://www.HelpfulLivingMag.com) or scan the QR code to get started!



# UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

By Stan Popovich

**F**ear is part of human nature. The body's built-in "fight or flight" response to threats can protect us from harm. For those with anxiety disorders, however, even the most mundane things can feel like a threat, triggering an out-of-proportion fear response that negatively affects their lives. With the help of professional guidance, anxiety books, and other tools, however, a person can learn to manage and overcome their fears.

## SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Common symptoms of anxiety include the following:

- Persistent nervousness and worry that crowds out other thoughts
- Notable physical symptoms like shakiness, sweating, increased heart rate, or rapid breathing
- Restlessness (having trouble sitting still, shaking your leg, etc.)
- Feeling exhausted all the time
- Difficulty sleeping
- A nagging sense that something bad is about to happen
- Avoiding situations that make you anxious, even at the cost of relationships and opportunities

## TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety can manifest in a variety of forms for a variety of reasons, both genetic and environmental. Over decades of study, psychologists have identified numerous distinct types of anxiety disorders. The following are just a few examples of known disorders.

### GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

Generalized anxiety disorder is defined by persistent general worry and anxiety about various things in life. The anxiety is out of proportion to the situations, and it can seem to others that someone is worrying for no reason. However, the reason for the worry is very real to the sufferer and difficult to control; they can't just "let it go."

Generalized anxiety affects a person on a daily basis and can make even ordinary tasks difficult and exhausting to handle. It is often concurrent with other diagnoses, such as depression or other anxiety disorders.





## SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

Social anxiety involves intense fear and avoidance of social situations. A person with this disorder may avoid various social interactions and events because they are afraid that they will be judged, laughed at, or disliked by other people.

Most people can understand being nervous to give a speech or meet new people, but the self-consciousness of social anxiety affects a person's ability to live a healthy, productive life. Even seemingly small tasks like making a phone call can be so terrifying that they will avoid it at all costs and may panic if forced to do so.

## SEPARATION ANXIETY DISORDER

This disorder is unique from others in that it is primarily seen during childhood. For children with separation anxiety, being separated from parents, guardians, or other parent-like figures leads to excessive fear and distress. While it is normal for a child to be somewhat upset when they are separated from caregivers, children with this disorder show anxiety beyond what is considered healthy for their developmental level.

Though it is not as common as childhood separation anxiety, adults may also be diagnosed with this disorder if they show extreme distress when separated from a certain person or pet. Adult separation anxiety behavior can appear controlling—needing to know where a spouse is at all times, constantly checking in—but, at its core, it is about uncontrollable fear.

## PANIC DISORDER

Unlike other anxiety disorders that involve a constant level of fear or worry throughout the day, panic disorder is marked by episodes of fast-spiking anxiety known as panic attacks. A person can reach the peak of panic within minutes after being triggered, experiencing symptoms of extreme terror, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, and more.

A person with a panic disorder may develop a fear of situations in which they may experience a panic attack. As they begin to avoid more and more potentially triggering situations, it can severely limit their ability to function and lead healthy lives.

## OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) involves a cycle of obsessive thoughts that sufferers attempt to satisfy with compulsive behaviors. Thoughts vary, but common fears include contamination by germs, losing control, being harmed, or seeing loved ones harmed. In an attempt to quiet the thoughts, a person will perform compulsive actions, such as washing their hands five times in a row or checking a locked door several times.

Someone without OCD may double-check things, but they are usually able to move on quickly. A person with OCD may spend an entire day washing and re-washing dishes because the thoughts will not stop. Compulsing is often the only way they know to temporarily calm their minds.

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a disorder that develops after a person has experienced or seen a traumatic event. The terror is so powerful that it causes the person to have persistent anxiety, nightmares, and vivid flashbacks that can seem very real. It's normal for people to struggle temporarily after trauma, but a person with PTSD will continue to have daily symptoms for months or years.

PTSD is well-known for its incidence among military veterans, but it can be caused by any experience that is sufficiently terrifying to a person. Examples include things like abuse, assault, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks.

## AGORAPHOBIA

Agoraphobia is a unique anxiety disorder that involves an extreme fear of any situation from which the person worries there might not be a clear escape. The idea of leaving home, being in a crowd of people, or entering an enclosed space can create intense anxiety as they begin to worry that they will be trapped or embarrassed. If possible, they will avoid the situation or take a companion with them for comfort.

Most people have times where they are temporarily hesitant to go out or be seen by others—like a teenager afraid to let anyone see her first pimple. A person with agoraphobia, however, experiences persistent, out-of-proportion fear and

avoidant behaviors for six months or more. In severe cases, a person may avoid leaving the house entirely.

## OTHER SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

A person with a specific phobia experiences an intense, uncontrollable fear of a certain type of object, person, or situation. Unlike a standard fear or dislike of something, a phobia seriously affects a person's day-to-day function and can cause extreme anxiety even in seemingly safe situations.

Someone with a typical fear of spiders may scream when they see one, but they are otherwise able to lead a normal life. A person with a phobia of spiders, on the other hand, might avoid unfamiliar places and situations due to the overwhelming fear that they may encounter a spider.

## START OVERCOMING ANXIETY IMMEDIATELY WITH REAL, COMMONSENSE ADVICE

If you struggle with fear, you've probably already heard plenty of well-intended-but-disappointing advice from loved ones and typical anxiety self-help books. I hope this information helps bring clarity, however it is also important to seek a mental health specialist to gain tools and have conversations on the next steps to take.

### About Stan Popovich:



Stan Popovich is the author of the popular managing fear book, "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear". For more information about Stan's book and to get some more free mental health advice, please visit Stan's website at [managingfear.com](http://managingfear.com).

# BENEFITS OF A SUPPORT SYSTEM AND HOW TO FIND ONE

By Hazel Walker, LMFT

**M**essages that we receive about support and what it means, is often influenced by societal norms, cultural practices, and family expectations. These lessons that we have learned have an impact on the way we interact with the idea of what it means to be supported. A common narrative amongst moms is that support isn't necessary because the unspoken expectation is that moms are supposed to do it all. Some of the common misconceptions associated with asking for help or receiving support are: I'm weak if I ask for help or I'm not good enough if I ask for help. So how do we change the way we view what it means to have a support system? First, let's define support, then let's explore the benefits of having a support system, and lastly let's identify practical ways for you to build up your support team.

## DEFINING SUPPORT

According to the Oxford dictionary, support is defined as, "to be actively interested in and concerned for the success of." So, what that implies is that having a great support system means that we are surrounded by people who genuinely want to see us succeed. The other aspect is knowing that these individuals will be there for you in moments when you are struggling as well. Keep in mind that those who are truly there to support you won't celebrate your downfall. Instead, they provide love and support in ways that help to fill you up.

## BENEFITS OF HAVING A SOLID SUPPORT SYSTEM

Being surrounded by like-minded individuals who are interested in being there for you in celebratory and/or challenging moments is important. There is a concept that I talk to my clients about and it is that we all get to



choose the membership level of each person in our life. What this means is that, ultimately you decide who stays and who goes. So, when you think about building your support system, you want to be intentional and strategic about those you place in your circle. There is so much beauty in recognizing that you don't have to do any part of life alone. Knowing that there are people you can reach out to in your high and low moments is important to your success. Now let's look at some of the benefits of having great support: it provides increased overall well-being, it helps to give a sense of belonging, and it helps to minimize stress.

## WAYS TO BUILD YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

As you think about ways to build your support system, it may be important to first reflect on your views of what it means to be supported. How does this impact your willingness to reach out for help and to use it when offered? By doing this, you give yourself the opportunity to work through any misconceptions you might have about support and your beliefs about using it. Next, it's crucial for you to identify the ways in which you feel most supported and who you would like to have as a part of that





Here's a question to ask yourself: what are the services and who are the people I need in my life to help me thrive? Connecting with others at community events, mom support groups, and church are some of the places you can start. You can also consider service providers like mental health clinicians, a personal chef, a nanny and home cleaning services. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that you see your worth and that you value yourself enough to know that you deserve to be supported. Please remember that you are not meant to navigate life alone. So if you find yourself without a support system, take some time to reflect on the ways you can build one today.

### About Hazel Walker:



support system. Family, close friends, and professional support can all be a part of the network that you build. Maybe you are someone who values when others show up for you: they come to your events or they invite you out to brunch when they know you've had a tough week. For others, having your support encourage you with their words is the primary way you feel supported. Spending some time to identify your love language may help to provide insight into your preferred way of being supported.



Hazel Walker is a licensed marriage and family therapist who is dedicated to teaching moms and couples how to thrive in their postpartum experience. She supports moms as they navigate the journey of rediscovering who they are after having a baby. Hazel is the CEO of It's aPARENTly Time, LLC and she is the host of It's aPARENTly Time Podcast. Through her work, she provides tools on how to improve self-care as moms, she works to help couples understand how to work better as a team, and she provides practical tips on how to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. Hazel has hosted the "Am I Ready For Parenthood Workshop?" and she has collaborated with many community providers such as doulas, OBGYN's, and other mental health professionals to ensure that moms feel more supported. You can find Hazel on Instagram @ itsaparentlytime and you can sign up for her free guide on creating boundaries by going to her website [www.itsaparentlytime.com](http://www.itsaparentlytime.com)



## UNMASKING THE REALITY OF COMPASSION FATIGUE AND BURNOUT

By Sharise Nance, LCSW|CCTP

Over the years, we have realized the mental and physical toll taken on individuals, including leadership in helping professions of educators, mental health professionals, occupational therapists, nursing, social work, human services, criminal justice, psychology, and public health. Stress results from the repeated exposure and interaction with individuals who are suffering or have suffered trauma. Leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others known as compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue doesn't just make it difficult to feel empathy for patients. Burnout is often another component. Usually associated with too much work and not enough resources to do the work well. Burnout can result in depression and anxiety, physical and emotional exhaustion, less enjoyment of work, and more arguing.

Another component of compassion fatigue is secondary traumatic stress, or indirect exposure to trauma via helping others. Symptoms include anxiety, intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, numbness, or feelings of having nothing left to give.

To keep compassion fatigue from developing or to address it if it does, you must first recognize who is at risk and the signs:

### Risk Factors:

- New to profession
- Limited support
- History of personal trauma or burnout
- Identity of helping professionals
- Working long hours
- Large caseloads

### Physical symptoms include:

- Frequent aches and pains, GI problems and/or recurrent illness
- Exhaustion
- Weight gain or loss
- Change in appearance due to lack of hygiene/self-care

### Emotional Symptoms include:

- Increased irritability or anger
- Sadness and/or apathy
- Anxiety
- Impatience



- Preoccupation/difficulty concentrating
- Denial of painful feelings of guilt
- Loss of hope (in your clients, loved ones, work)
- Constantly feeling unfulfilled at the end of the workday

**Behavioral Symptoms include:**

- Decline in work performance
- Emotional outbursts; excessive blaming or complaining
- Self-isolating
- Difficulty taking care of daily tasks; loss of pleasure in activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Compulsive behaviors i.e. overspending, overeating, overworking, gambling, etc.
- Recurrence of nightmares and/or flashbacks to a traumatic event

To prevent and treat the symptoms of compassion fatigue, individuals and organizations should focus on the 5 Pillars of Self-Care. Remembering to make self-care a priority and not just a reward.

- 1. Basic needs** – reduce the vulnerability rate by eating a balanced, nutritious diet, getting restful sleep, and exercising regularly.
- 2. Values** – rely on your integrity, family, and community to keep yourself aligned with work and life balance.
- 3. Boundaries** – set emotional boundaries to protect yourself. Show empathy and compassion without taking on the pain of others.
- 4. Self-compassion** – show yourself grace and recognize that no one is perfect. Care for yourself the same way you care for others.
- 5. Relaxation** – Take regular mental breaks throughout the day. This can include listening to your favorite song, taking a walk, or repeating a positive mantra.

Organizations and leaders need to recognize the importance of building resilient healers, which will increase morale and improve retention. Give staff the resources they need to do the job. Such supporting a work check-in that provides options for leaders and employees to self-reflect on their own mental and emotional states of mind.

Ensuring that leaders model the importance of rest by scheduling and taking breaks throughout the workday. Educating employees and managers about how to access organizational and local resources, such as benefit plans, crisis hotlines and mental health clinics. Encouraging rest for fatigued or burned-out workers, by destigmatizing personal leaves for mentally or emotionally exhausted employees and having a judgment-free return to work plan.

The symptoms of compassion fatigue can arise abruptly, so it is important to have a plan and resources. Organizations like Vitamin C Healing, focus on the mental and emotional wellbeing of helping professionals and mental health leaders. We offer resources such as corporate trainings, staff workshops and books, online workshops, guides to creating a foundation of self-awareness and self-compassion and quizzes to identify staff and leadership burnout. Visit [sharisenance.com](http://sharisenance.com) to book a call with Sharise Nance, LCSW|CCTP (also known as the Compassion Fatigue Expert).

**About Sharise Nance, LCSW|CCTP:**



Sharise Nance is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Trauma Specialist, Workshop Facilitator, Global Speaker, Award Winning and Serial Author and Entrepreneur. She is the co-owner and founder of HandinHand Counseling Services, LLC and has over 20 years of experience assisting individuals, couples and families see beyond energy depletion, hopelessness, panic, guilt and feeling overwhelmed and assists them in making a shift to a place of peace, joy, clarity and satisfaction. Sharise also dedicates her efforts to running Vitamin C Healing, LLC an organization that helps companies prevent Leadership Burnout and Compassion Fatigue using a trauma sensitive and systems approach to create a supportive work culture that prioritizes work life balance and integration. With considerable experience speaking at keynotes, workshops, and seminars for helping professionals, mental health leaders and entrepreneurs across the globe, she strives to equip individuals with the tools to tolerate the high demands of work and life, imposter syndrome as well as manage and prevent compassion fatigue and burnout in order to live happy, fulfilled lives and careers.

Sharise is also the founder and creator of the S.W.A.G. Awards: Social Worker Appreciation of Greatness Awards, to honor the “heart work” of local social workers in the Greater Pittsburgh area who often go unappreciated and unrecognized. She is the proud wife of William Nance, and during her spare time she enjoys running half marathons, reading, watching sports, traveling, and trying new foods. More information on Sharise can be found by visiting [www.sharisenance.com](http://www.sharisenance.com) and on social media @sharisenance across all social media handles Facebook, IG, LinkedIn & Twitter

# Darius Fennell

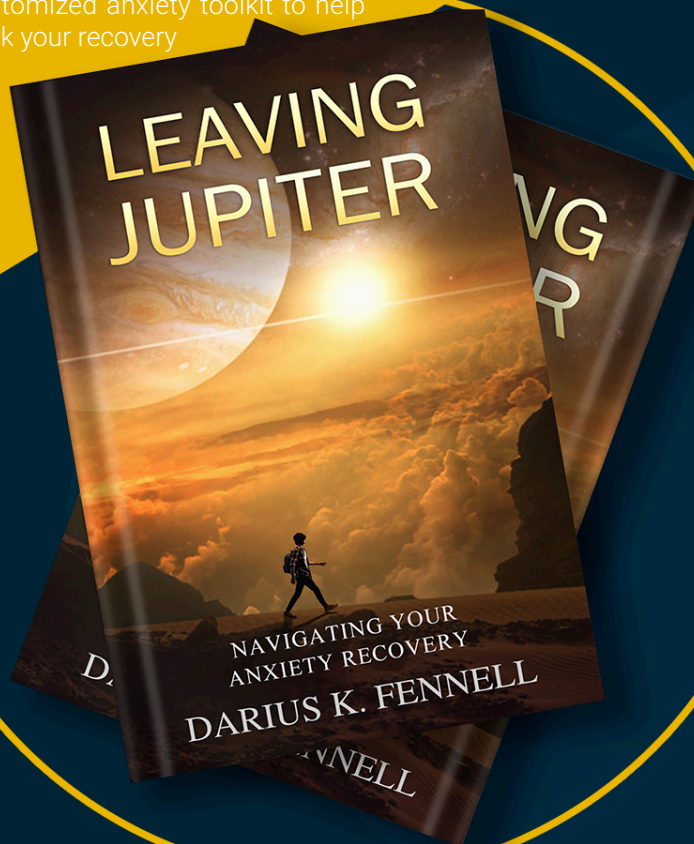
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# 5 THINGS PEOPLE DON'T TALK ABOUT IN GRIEF

By Dr La-Renda Jones



**W**e are in a society where honestly, the word grief is an uncomfortable word. The word exhibits stares, conversations are interrupted and people remove themselves from the conversation. People tend to connect the word “grief” to only physical death. Physical death is inevitable and whether we believe it or refuse to believe it, it’s a fact of life.

I am a faith-based therapist who specializes in grief work. I often talk to clients about their understanding of grief and what grief means to them. Sessions are spent introducing grief issues and giving examples where grief lies as adversity and challenges in life. I attempt to bring comfort to talking about the issues they present.

There are many reasons why people don't talk about grief, and here are 5 reasons why.

## 1. PROCESSING EMOTIONS

Emotions can be difficult to process and for many difficult to express what they mean. Emotions can be grievous and are often hidden through a smile or a face that appears to have no concern. Underneath the facial expressions, there is grief because there are problems rolling in the brain and heart which make it difficult to process. If there is a lack of understanding of how to solve a problem, a person may become overwhelmed and feel their situation is grievous to them. Suicide is an example of grief because the person feels hopeless, distraught and overwhelmed. When emotions overflow this may result in one taking their life.

## 2. THE LANGUAGE OF GRIEF

Let's face it, everyone grieves something. The language of grief is not popular and is

usually something one does not wish to discuss. Grief is real and is experienced in different ways. Grief bothers us. We don't like how it makes us feel. Grief is like a fly that annoys us. The way we handle grief is similar to getting the fly swatter to catch it and get rid of it. As aforementioned, grief is viewed as only graveyard death but severe problems make us feel grievous as well. Should we run from what makes us grieve we won't get the help we need.

## 3. LACK OF PLANNING

Grief is not planned because it's an afterthought. We want great and productive days but in reality, no day will be perfect. Planning is necessary and should be mandatory in specific things. One example is life insurance. How often have I experienced “grievous” expressions from people that don't have life insurance and have no intentions of purchasing any. I



often hear “I cannot afford it”. Without life insurance put in place, grief surfaces and there are arguments and discord among families about this subject. Yes, life insurance can be expensive but if there is an area that needs attention, life insurance is definitely one of them. Finances is another issue that causes grievous feelings and thoughts. The lack of financial planning will only result in excessive debt.

#### 4. LACK OF SUPPORT

How often do we credit our support? Not often because asking for support makes one feel vulnerable especially when professionals are involved. One may not seek support from a professional for two reasons: the price may be too costly and there may be a lack of trust in speaking with someone unfamiliar. Family members are sometimes looked upon for solutions. However, there are occasions when the advice they offer results in friction. Family members bring in their own ideas and how their views worked for them. Every person in the family is unique. As a result, seeking a trained professional can help since they are trained to assess various views and to assist with bringing clarity to the process.

#### 5. CLOSURE

There are no perfect answers to how to bring closure to any situation but answers are available when they are processed. I encourage journaling often and suggest paying attention to the designs of the journals since they have significance. When bringing closure to a problem, it can be helpful to develop a list of the issues and what has been attempted toward a resolution. Additionally, I suggest having a different mindset when looking at how issues were handled previously. At times, we give up too easily when evaluating how to close a gap to problems we have. Time limitations may be in place. In any event, one should continue revisiting the issues until solutions are formulated that meets their needs.

The list grows for reasons why people don't talk about grief but the encouragement is not to see grief as a negative but as something

that can be turned into a positive. When we handle our grief, there is Hope, and Nothing is Impossible.

#### About Dr La-Renda Jones:



Dr. LaRenda Jones, is a native New Yorker, and Founder of Beneath the Grief Counseling Services since 2001. She specializes in grief recovery, an author of four books, *Handle Your Grief*, *There is Hope, Nothing is Impossible* *Grief to Growth (Mindful Journey to Help through Grievous Moments)* with Co-author, Darlene Nowlin, MSW a blogger, a podcaster, ministry leader and educator. Dr. Jones has participated in conferences, summits, speaking engagements and facilitated groups. She is currently preparing to conduct a Ted Talk, to reach out to Dr. Jones on her website [beneaththegriefministriescounselingservices.mystrikingly.com](http://beneaththegriefministriescounselingservices.mystrikingly.com) or [beneaththegriefministrieswherejesuschristisonthenetwork.mystrikingly.com](http://beneaththegriefministrieswherejesuschristisonthenetwork.mystrikingly.com)



# LOVE BALUNGI

with Catherine Waiswa

**C**atherine B. Waiswa is a first generation Ugandan- American and Founder of Love Balungi. Her natural beauty products are produced and served throughout the country. As a young adult from Boston, MA, she loves to listen to music, travel and is passionate about beauty and feeling beautiful. She is passionate about educating individuals on the importance of natural and safe products to help people with their overall skin care routine.

**HL: What does mental health mean to you?**

**CW:** Everything! I have anxiety and depression. So maintaining and taking care of my mental health is a high priority for me.

**HL: In what ways does skin care impact someone's mental health and wellness?**

**CW:** skin care for me is self care. It is a time of doing good for yourself and taking care of yourself. If you look good, you feel good.

**HL: What tips can you provide to someone who wants to start a skincare regime?**

**CW:** Do not over complicate yourself. Start off slowly. The main steps you want to take for your skin care regime is a cleanser, toner, and moisturizer. Understanding your skin type is key. Do you have dry, oily, or combination skin? Be sure to find products for your skin type, so research is critical! Read reviews and be mindful, not everything that works for someone else, will work for you.



**HL: What encouragement do you have for someone who wants to start a business?**

**CW:** Follow your gut! Believe in yourself and find your niche. It is important to check out groups that interest you, social media is a great place to start when searching for groups. Think about something you could do for free, that you are passionate about, and want to learn how to perfect. YouTube is also a great place to start when searching for your niche. After you get a good start, be sure to search for an accountability partner or a business mentor.

**HL: What inspired Love Balungi?**

**CW:** Love Balungi is inspired by my mom. She gave me the middle name Balungi out of the two that I have. Balungi means well and beautiful in Luganda. My parents came here with nothing and worked their butts off to provide a foundation for us. My mother was always into makeup, beauty and skin care. Whether she wore lipstick, perfume, or body butter, she was always taking care of

herself so beautifully. Love Balungi is an ode to her and the amazing being that she was. When I lost her in 2019, Love Balungi was my way of keeping her memory alive and also the love for beauty we share.

**HL: What are some accomplishments you have achieved since starting Love Balungi?**

**CW:** My biggest accomplishment has been facing my fears. If you were to tell me 10 years ago that I would be a business owner, I would laugh. Also, believing in myself and having the courage to share my products with the world. This journey has not been easy. But, I am ready and excited for this journey. I took a break in 2021 and relaunched in 2022.

**Mental Moment:** There is no such thing as failing, only lessons learned -Catherine Waiswa

## About Catherine Waiswa:



Catherine continues to talk about her beauty products and find ways to help people engage and learn more about skin care. To connect with Catherine you can visit her website at [Lovebalungi.com](http://Lovebalungi.com).



# FOCUSING ON MEDITATION

By Sonia Ross, LCSW-C

**T**he topic of meditation is very popular right now and has been for the last ten years or more. It is often something that is regularly suggested because of its health benefits but for many it is hard to do. This is especially true for black women. As a somatic psychotherapist, who specializes in working with black women, I hear the same things when I suggest meditation, “It’s too hard. I can’t get my mind to be quiet.”

I have heard these things numerous times when it comes to meditation. While these are common statements they are not fundamentally true. Everyone can meditate. The goal of meditation is not to get the ‘monkey mind’ to be quiet. The mind is a faithful servant but it needs to be given something else to do while you are accessing a meditative state.

The form of meditation that I have found to be most helpful with all bodies, and especially those of black women, is somatic meditation. The word ‘soma’ is Latin for

body. And when you engage in somatic meditation you are engaging your body as part of the meditative process. You are not ignoring your body in meditation - you are including it.

This can be extremely healing for black women. Within our bodies we have experienced a great deal of trauma - ancestrally, collectively and as part of our individual experiences. To drop into your body as a black woman can be extremely healing. But it is also a very delicate and sensitive process because your connection with your body is often being awakened often for the first time.

When going into any meditative process as a black woman it is important to know from the very beginning that there is a lot going on inside of you that you are not consciously aware of. For many reasons, too numerous to name in this brief space, we have had to suppress a lot of what we really think and feel in order to survive. This has often led to a complete disconnection from our own bodies.







With this in mind you should treat yourself with as much delicateness and softness as possible. This I know is counter to all of the messages we have received in this world about the bodies of black women and how we should treat ourselves. But it is true. If you want to heal and establish a new connection with yourself and your body you must treat yourself with care.

I know for many of us treating ourselves with care is a paradigm shift. But it is one we need to make in order to chart a new path forward for ourselves and our healing. So as you enter the somatic meditation space and begin reconnecting with your body, go very slowly, be patient with yourself and give yourself a lot of grace. So allow me to guide you through a brief somatic reconnection exercise.

First begin by noticing your breath. Just gently tune into your breathing pattern and notice the rise and fall of your chest. Do this for about ten seconds.

Then bring your hands to your heart or your chest. Just notice them there feeling the weight of them on your chest. Allow yourself to really connect with the weight of your hands on your chest. Continue to focus on your breath.

As you breathe with your hands on your chest, gently soften your gaze or close your eyes if that feels comfortable for you. Continue to focus on your breath.

Now allow your attention to gently turn inward. Allow your mind to do whatever it's doing. Don't be frustrated or upset with it. Just acknowledge it and focus your attention inward on your breath and what's happening in your inner landscape.

With your attention now focused inward, notice any sensation you feel in your body. You may notice something in several places, one place in particular or none at all. Whatever you do or don't notice is perfect for where you are in this moment right now. And just breathe and continue to focus on your breath.

Pick one feeling in your body that you are noticing and gently bring your attention there. You are not analyzing it or trying to fix it or make it go away. You are just gently breathing and observing. You have begun to establish a new connection with your body that you never had before.

At this point you may have begun feeling a sense of calm over your body as you breathe, witness and observe. And guess what.. You are meditating! So there you go!

So this is just a very tiny drop of what you can experience with somatic body based meditation. This is a beautiful and gentle practice that can allow you to calm yourself and reconnect with your body at the same time. You may want to record yourself reading these steps out loud so they can guide you in daily practice.

But I advise that you go very slowly, carefully and delicately so that you can build trust with your body and honor all of its experiences at the same time.

## About Sonia Ross:



Sonia Ross is a spiritualist, energy healer and a somatic psychotherapist specializing in the mental and emotional needs of black women. She is the CEO and Founder of Full Circle Therapy Services LLC. A holistic mental health space that supports the spiritual, emotional, and mental healing of black women. In her work she supports women healing from depression, anxiety and other emotional wounds so that they can develop a compassionate and loving relationship with themselves on their path of healing. Her work can be followed on her website: [www.soniaross.com](http://www.soniaross.com) and her YouTube channel where she shares weekly meditations.

It's common to use negative words whenever we are frustrated with ourselves and others. It's typical to say *I am dumb, I am tired, I can't do this*. Our words matter, what we think, we say, what we say we do, what we do... we become. Below are ways to alter your way of thinking. We might not change the particular situation we are in but we can change the way we view it by thinking in a positive way.

### Instead of This:

- ⊗ I can't do this
- ⊗ This is frustrating
- ⊗ I am done
- ⊗ She/he is so much better than me

### Say This:

- ✔ I can do this I just need some guidance
- ✔ This is challenging but I have faced obstacles before. If I can complete something like this before I can do it again
- ✔ I am going to take a break, rest my mind and come back
- ✔ Comparing my weaknesses to others does not allow me to see my own strengths



# HEALING STARTS WITHIN: HERE'S HOW

By Cynthia Omekam

**B**efore I began my healing journey back in 2012, no one could have convinced me that I played a role in the overwhelming stress, and crushing weight I was aimlessly functioning under. It was the stress of life's unrealistic timelines, expectations from my family, friends, job, spouse or that person that cut me off in traffic. I'm pretty sure at this point you see where I'm going with this, or maybe you don't, but you can feel every word because it's currently a snapshot of your reality. Either way I'm here to share one of the most life changing ah ha moments that I experienced early on as I've been ascending through my journey. You hold so much more power and control over your life experience than you think. And it's the lack of connection to this truth that has caused you to be held stagnant, despite a deep desire to break free.

The moment I allowed myself to really dig deep and open my heart and mind to the reality of what I was going through, everything took a 360. I became an observer of my life and from this standpoint it became clear that I was not using my birthright of free will. The freedom to say no, the freedom to rest, the freedom to own my uniqueness, the freedom to choose peace. I could go on and on but again I'm sure you get the point. Nonetheless, this was the core of the reasoning behind my suffering and dissatisfaction. Yes, there were external triggers and contributors to my emotional response, but the power and control of my experience never changed. I was capable and always had the opportunity to stand firm in my power to move forward with choices that upheld and nurtured my wellbeing. Of course it's easier said than done but it's definitely possible.

So until you're open and willing to face and accept this truth, the reality is you'll never truly break free from the anguish. You'll never experience the abundant life that you desire and deserve.

Which is why I constantly encourage my clients to start their journey with simple mindfulness techniques and activities. Self-discovery, self-awareness and emotional intelligence are keys to true transformational healing and growth. So it's important that you're ready to really do the work because as we all know, anything that strokes the ego in the wrong way, proves to be some of the most challenging things we have to face along this journey. But it's in these moments, you will experience the most life altering transformations. You'll be

able to identify external issues to remove yourself from, as well as internal conflicts you need to change within. A route sure to lead you back to your higher self, a higher consciousness. The space where things like true peace, joy and fulfillment become a more consistent part of your reality. However, despite this vision of rainbows and butterflies that I've depicted, it's important I caution that this journey will definitely not be easy but it will indeed be beyond worth it. Which is why I think it's important you remember that although no one else can do the work for you, you definitely don't have to do it alone.

Making the decision to become more intentional about your healing journey is a major step towards taking control and



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# Weekly Peace Mantra

I give myself permission to heal.

I have the patience to overcome this.

I am healing more each day.



prioritizing your mental health. And so often many are held back from actually taking action due to lack of clarity around where to start or how to navigate blocks that often come up along the way. However, the great

part about this journey is that it was never meant to be traveled alone. Which is why I highly encourage you to get the support that you deserve and will need. Some great resources include: therapist/counselors,

"We can never obtain peace in the outer world  
...until we make peace with ourselves."

-Dalai Lama

spiritual advisors/healers, life coaches, community healing groups/events and online support forums.

So in closing, I leave you with these words of encouragement: Rise up beloved and take back your power. Make yourself a priority, commit to the process and utilize your resources. You deserve to live an abundant life, you deserve to be free!

## About Cynthia Omekam



Cynthia Omekam, the owner of Holistic Liberation LLC, is a Certified Holistic Life Coach and an Accredited Spiritual Healer. She is devoted to supporting others as they break free from stress and anxiety and begin living more peaceful, balanced and fulfilling lifestyles. She specializes in stress management, establishing inner peace, mindful living and spirituality. Cynthia provides one-on-one, couples and group coaching services online, alongside other various meditation and spiritual healing services. She has co hosted several powerful healing events and has been featured on many platforms, podcasts and other media outlets. Cynthia continues to impact hundreds through the use of her 10+ years of training in relaxation/grounding techniques and mental health services. And when she's not working Cynthia is a major foodie so she loves trying out new restaurants, vibing to good music, taking on adrenaline pumping adventures, spending time with the ones that she loves most, creating unforgettable memories with her husband and pretty much anything that leads her closer to her higher self. You can connect with her on Instagram @holistic\_liberation and at [campsite.bio/holisticliberation](https://campsite.bio/holisticliberation).



Take this time to unscramble words you may hear regarding your wellness and health.

1. snelwels .....
2. liskls locasi .....
3. dknesisn .....
4. tcerspe .....
5. yqaluite .....
6. gihalen .....
7. fmlunsisde .....
8. ktiolot .....
9. klwa .....
10. ljauron .....
11. ninpgaln .....

Answer Key:

1. Wellness 2. Social Skills 3. Kindness 4. Respect 5. Equality 6. Healing 7. Mindfulness 8. Toolkit 9. Walk 10. Journal 11. Planning



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# THE BENEFITS OF THERAPY

By Author Darius Fennell

**F**or years, I put off going to therapy. Initially I thought it was for people who had some catastrophic event happen in their life or thought they were just crazy or weak. How terribly wrong I was! There were so many things I could have avoided in my own life by going, but nonetheless, I found myself at a very dark place battling debilitating and chronic anxiety about 5 years ago. My recovery was not quick, nor did I know what to do after being in the hospital for 5 days, for what I thought was a heart attack. Doctors ran every test under the sun on me and every one of them came back negative. On the last day there, they told me they believed I had a panic attack and to follow up with my primary care physician. That was it... no other guidance for the symptoms that were still present after being discharged.

Sometimes it takes a major event to cause you to consider options you once dismissed. At that point in my life, you could have told me to smear peanut butter on my head and I would have done it if it would have taken my anxiety away. Certainly I was then open to the idea of therapy because I did not have the capacity or the knowledge to recover by myself. While I was no stranger to anxiety, what I was experiencing at the moment was a totally different magnitude, which depleted me to sheer exhaustion both mentally and physically. Not even a week later, I started the therapy onboarding process and began the long journey of recovery. It has been one of the best decisions I have ever made in my LIFE as I have experienced many benefits while attending.

## SAFE SPACE

Perhaps the most vital component of therapy, in my opinion, is having space to develop trust with your therapist and speak your truth: the good, bad, and ugly. There is a freedom in being able to talk about your pain, mistakes, and vulnerabilities in a non-judgemental environment. You recognize your therapist has your best interest in mind and your secrets are kept confidential by law (with the exception of expressed harm



to yourself or others). Imagine having so many emotions trapped in your mind (and body) but now having somewhere to release them! Once released, your therapist can provide professional feedback, insight, and a fresh perspective. This is the first critical step towards gaining freedom. I experienced this very often and sometimes ran over my session time.

## STRATEGY

A therapist is professionally educated, licensed, and clinically trained to listen with empathy and provide strategies for the issues and circumstances you present. They help to bring you out of old negative thought patterns and behaviors, recognize your strengths, and equip you with tools that improve how you treat yourself and others. This was one of the most powerful aspects of therapy that helped me gain confidence. I experienced small wins that later added up in major ways. I began to recognize which tools worked best for me and decided to create a toolkit I could refer back to later. Everyone's tools and victories are unique to that individual but it was comforting to know I did not have to figure all that out on my own.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

With any process of growth, there is no lasting change without accountability. Because some mindsets are difficult to change and we tend to grip the familiar strongly, accountability is needed as a reminder that you made a commitment to change and your therapist is dedicated to assist you and gently tell you the truth. For me, there was never a time where this was

done in a condemning way. In fact, sometimes I did not even recognize my old mindset was creeping its way back. In order to make lasting change stick, this component of therapy was vital and I am grateful and better off for it.

My hope is that you make a commitment to yourself first, and know that you are worth getting the help you need to help you grow beyond your current circumstances and limitations. By recognizing your willpower alone is not enough to handle pain, trauma, and struggles, it is in your best interest to partner with a therapist and advocate for your own mental health and healing. You will be so glad that you did. I know I am!

## About the Darius Fennell:



Darius Fennell is an author, mental health coach, and therapy advocate. He is a proud HBCU alumnus of North Carolina A&T State University with a bachelor's in Electrical Engineering and also a master's Electrical Engineering graduate from University of Rochester. Darius has a strong desire to break down mental health and therapy stigmas especially among the African American community and has recently published his new book, *Leaving Jupiter: Navigating Your Anxiety Recovery*. Darius desires for those who struggle with their mental health to never lose hope, find the courage to partner with licensed professionals, and advocate for their own mental health.

# COMMON SENSE PARENTING

With Damian Kinsey

**D**AMIAN (No E in his name) KINSEY is The Director of Care Coordination Services, Community Programs for Boys Town Washington DC. Through BoysTown community-based services, he has been able to impact and serve hundreds of kids and families. What makes their programs special is the ability to work with entire families, schools, and connect to community resources at a time when families are struggling. Boys Town Washington’s community-based program provides a holistic approach to truancy intervention, community, school, and family support.

**HL: Is there a right or wrong parenting style? Ex. Helicopter Parent, Or Parent being a child’s best friend**

**DK:** It’s not about right or wrong parenting skills, it’s about being a support for the parents. We know that the parents are the experts on their child’s behavior. We just want to give them more tools in their parenting tool belt or pull existing skills to the forefront.

**“Social Interaction plays a part in parenting and child development,”**

*-Damian Kinsey*



**HL: Do you think social media has a role in how people parent, why or why not?**

**DK:** Social interaction plays a part in parenting and child development. The level depends on the family and its exposure to

social media. For some parents, it is a great opportunity to enhance their child’s people skills and for others, it’s the opposite. All things could be good or bad. The most important thing to remember is to monitor your child’s interactions and keep them safe.

**“Parenting is hard, especially if you are unable to communicate or have a lack of trust with your youth,”**

*-Damian Kinsey*

**HL: What can parents do today to help increase a better relationship with their child?**

**DK:** It’s important for parents to provide and keep open lines of communication with their children. Parenting is hard, especially if you are unable to communicate or have a lack of trust with your youth. With the addition of smartphones, children have access to so many things. Most importantly, with the access to technology, children must have an outlet and ability to come to their parents to ask questions and engage in conversations, especially challenges topics parents may be weary to talk about.

**HL: What is the Common Sense Parenting Program?**

**DK:** Common sense parenting is an interactive six-week workshop that focuses on teaching parents skills to help with supporting a child’s behavior. The cool thing about common sense parenting is that parents are experts and have the opportunity to work on scenarios that impact them daily over six weeks with a skilled parent trainer.

**HL: What techniques will parents learn while in the program?**

**DK:** Parents will learn multiple skills over the six-week workshop (effective praise, corrective teaching, preventive teaching, reasons, staying calm, and follow-up

teaching). The most important thing a parent will learn is that they are not alone. That they have the skills to be successful parents. Parents in our program will have support and we want to help them navigate their child’s difficult behaviors.

**HL: How can someone sign up for the program?**

**DK:** If you are looking to get involved or would like information about any of our programs please visit the Boys Town DC website: Welcome to Boys Town Washington DC | Boys Town. If you would like to get in contact with me feel free to reach out at [damian.kinsey@boystown.org](mailto:damian.kinsey@boystown.org)

**Mental Note:**

To any parent who is struggling or looking for help, I would say you are not alone. It’s people and organizations that want to help. Please reach out, because we are all in this together.

## About Damian Kinsey:

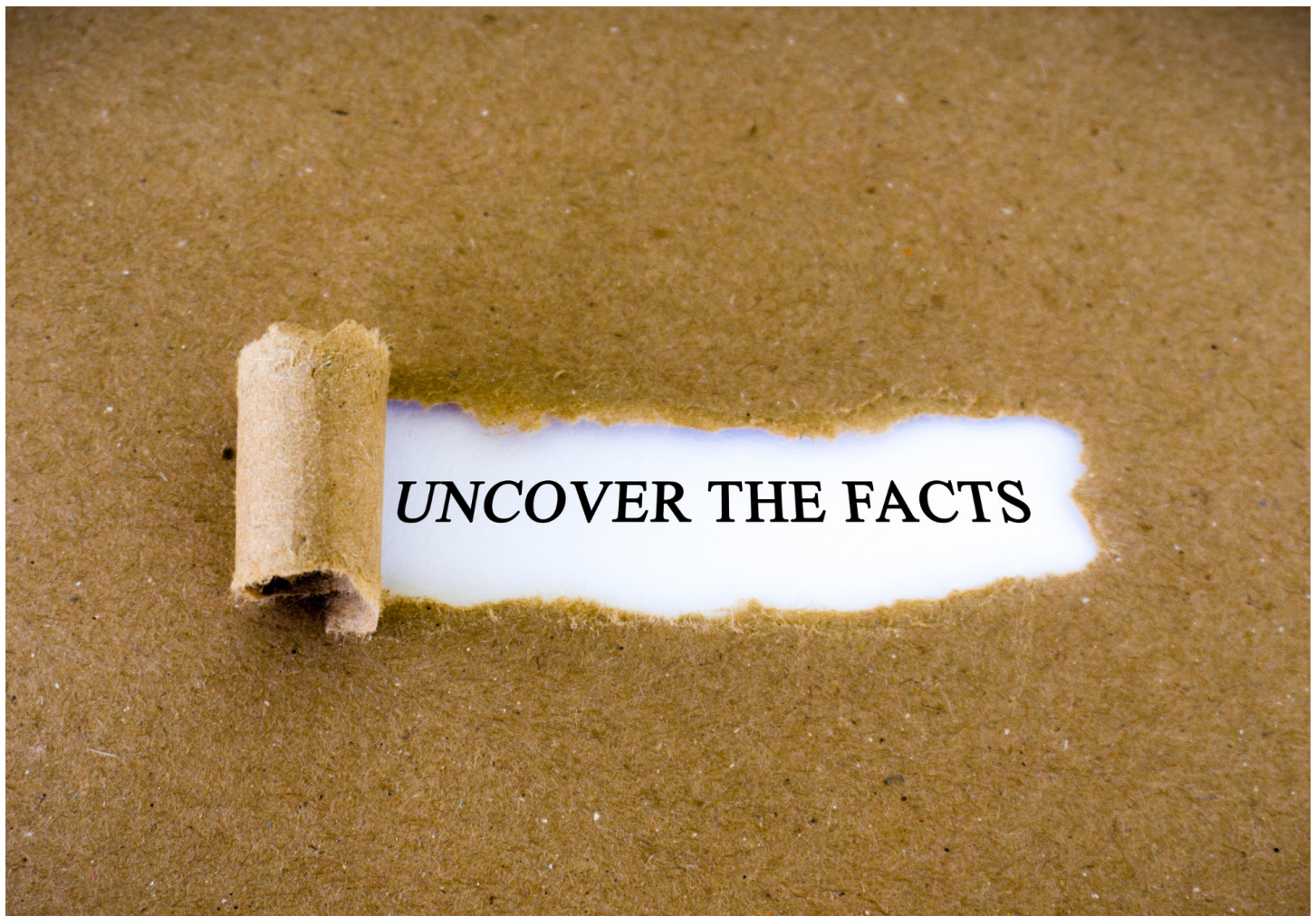


He is a native of New York City and completed his bachelor’s degree at The College of New Rochelle. He is currently working on his Master’s in Communication from Purdue University. At Boys Town, he oversees several community-based programs that focus on case management, school based intervention, summer enrichment, and parenting skills. In addition to the programs listed above we also have a Behavioral Health Clinic and Successful Futures Workforce Development Program.



# MYTH VS FACTS ABOUT TRAUMA

By Autumn Walker



**T**rauma has become a major buzzword circling around different media platforms. This rise in awareness comes with a lot of impactful benefits such as more conversations and people seeking out various resources to receive access to care. Simultaneously, I still recognize an immense need to educate the broader audience about the clinical concepts of trauma. Due to its complexity, the goal of my message today aims to clarify four common misconceptions often shared when on the topic of trauma.

**Myth:**

*Traumatic Events Must Always Seem "Extreme" and "Activating"*

**Fact:**

Firstly, clinical psychology defines trauma as a psychological response to any event you encounter or witness as a threat to someone's overall well being which can lead to a disruption in personal development. Trauma often gets pulled into a "this or that" debate when it in fact has apparent gray areas. For example, witnessing a tragic car accident can be just as traumatic as living through a pandemic. Attempting to place limitations on how we define trauma could add to the stigma and reverse the tireless work communities continue to put in to end it.

**Myth:**

*Trauma Only Affects The Individual*

**Fact:**

We have to constantly remind ourselves, especially in an individualistic society like America, that humans are social beings. Therefore, everything we do and experience will affect others in some shape or form. Due to trauma's intrusive nature, it becomes almost inevitable for it to not impact our relationships. You may have heard of the saying hurt people hurt people? This cliché definitely holds weight!

Not to mention, because unprocessed trauma can make a "home" in the body, it can rewire your entire body chemistry! Studies are now showing that trauma may have genetic components. This adds to the concept of generational trauma.



**Myth:**

*Trauma Is Just A Mental Health Thing*

**Fact:**

When I reflect on this myth, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris comes to mind. She actively speaks on the importance of how trauma “gets under our skin.” As previously mentioned, trauma has physiological implications that can result in ailments like high blood pressure, chronic pain, and a weakened immune system.

**Myth:**

*Trauma Will Never Go Away*

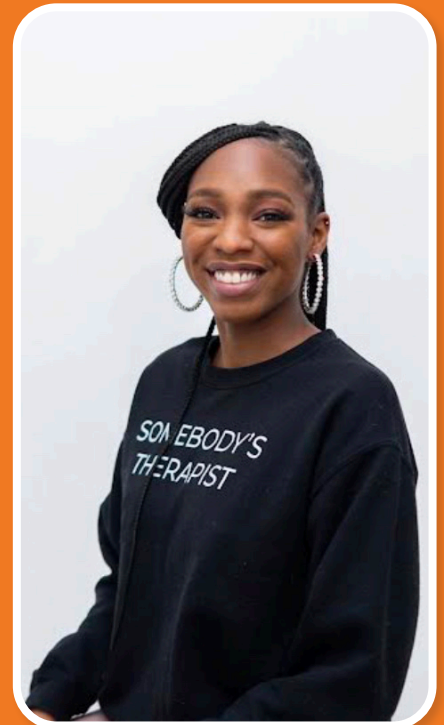
**Fact:**

This one is a tad tricky. Clinically speaking, trauma can have a long term impact on one’s mind, body, and spirit. Nevertheless, we have so many advantages in today’s time due to the level of advancement in the healthcare system. Trauma treatment requires a holistic approach; involving the family, community, clinical providers, and

more. Countless studies continue to publish more findings about the inner workings of trauma and its impact on our well-being.

As I stated before, this peak of interest in trauma has played a significant role in defying the social stigma associated with mental health for centuries. As the great Malcolm X once said, “Education is the passport to freedom.” Therefore, we must ensure we digest the correct information to defy stigmas and break down doors for more people to access necessary mental health care.

### About Autumn Walker



Autumn Walker is a Mental Health therapist licensed in Maryland. She has a strong passion for normalizing mental wellness in Black & Brown communities through a Godfident lens. She obtained her Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Johns Hopkins in 2020 and launched The Soul Reasons immediately after. She combined her devotion to social justice, faith, and mental health awareness to bring life to the vision. The driving purpose of The Soul Reasons is to keep the conversation of God and mental wellness centered in this disheartening sociopolitical climate. She is expanding her message through digital and community-based outlets to fight destructive stigmas and social systems.



# RED, BLACK AND BLUE IN THE FACE

By Savannah McCain



A country divided by  
differences yet here we  
stand, us two.

Staring at each other's  
colors: you red, us black  
and me blue.

We stand clasped hand  
in hand, our stances  
opposing we know.

It hardly makes a  
difference though,  
because you love me  
and I love you.

## About Savannah McCain:



Savannah McCain is a Pittsburgh Native who works in transplant medicine and has spent the last 8 years in various healthcare positions joyfully caring for her community. During her free time, she enjoys writing poems, journaling, studying at CCAC and spending time with loved ones discussing world issues. She's also a sucker for long walks to the couch where she can shamelessly indulge in her favorite true crime shows.





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# 5 TIPS TO NAVIGATE BEING A MINORITY IN THE WORKPLACE

By Donnalise Wilson, LPC

**L**ast month, I had a staff meeting. As I looked around the room, I couldn't help but notice only one other therapist looked like me. At previous places of employment and even in graduate school this was often a sad and similar reality. Statistically speaking, Black therapists only make up 4 % of all therapists in the field of psychotherapy. As a female clinician of color, I feel like a superhero breaking barriers of preconceived notions about who black women are, to white counterparts, especially when I hear a client say, "I am so glad to have a black therapist." For other Clinicians of Color just starting out in your career, here are some tips for navigating being a minority.

## TIP NUMBER 1. YOU ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH. YOU ARE THE ROYAL FLUSH.

You did the work, you passed the exams, you got the degree and maybe even the license. You do not need to prove yourself any further, your connection with your clients will speak for itself. Do not allow the imposter to have you comparing what you look like on paper versus in person. You are enough just as you are. Even if you are the only minority (as I have been) at your place of employment, you are a commodity, might I add a hot commodity as today many people are seeking and preferring a professional just like you.





## TIP NUMBER 2. DON'T DIM YOUR LIGHT TO MAKE OTHERS COMFORTABLE. PLAY THE CARDS YOU'VE BEEN DEALT.

If your blackness makes your co-workers uncomfortable it is not your job to change who you are to please them. This will only leave you feeling empty and you cannot pour out of an empty cup. You will be no good to those you serve. So, wear your natural hair, hang up Afrocentric art in your office (right next to your diplomas) however your blackness calls you to represent you. Take up space. Just be authentically who you are, because essentially isn't that what we should be modeling for our clients? Showing up everyday proud of who we are and practicing self-love is important. How we treat ourselves internally shows others how they ought to treat us externally.

## TIP NUMBER 3. SPEAKING OF SELF-LOVE, PRACTICING SELF-CARE.

I am not just talking about going to the Jazz fest or getting a mani/pedi with the girls. I am talking about taking time off work to reset. Not being afraid of being stereotyped as lazy for using your vacation time. Who cares what anyone thinks about what you do with your time off? Similarly, if you spend your time worrying about how you are being perceived, you will come back just as burned out as when you left, which again doesn't help your clients. Practice consistent healthy habits such as movement of the body, nurturing the mind, and easing the spirit. For me I enjoy doing yoga, meditation, reading, journaling, and traveling. Take a moment to think about

what you like to do during your personal time, write those thoughts down and plan a day to indulge in self-care. A tool that you can use is a journaling workbook Titled: Confessions from a BLACK therapist.

## TIP NUMBER 4. COMMUNICATION IS KEY. DON'T BE AFRAID TO CALL A SPADE A SPADE.

If someone does or says something off putting: address it immediately. Communicate how a comment or action made you feel uncomfortable. It is then their responsibility to accept self-reflect and hopefully grow as a person. However, people can't change what they don't know, or when they are doing something hurtful. Once I had a co-worker say they disliked a client and made the comment, "all they do is run around like a little monkey." This was on my second day of work, and I was the only clinician of color. I felt a shock wave of heat radiate through my body and I had to walk away. The next day I spoke with the co-work one-on-one. I explained how their comment was insensitive and upset me. This was a learning opportunity for both myself and the other party. They apologized, and we were able to resume a positive professional relationship for years to come.

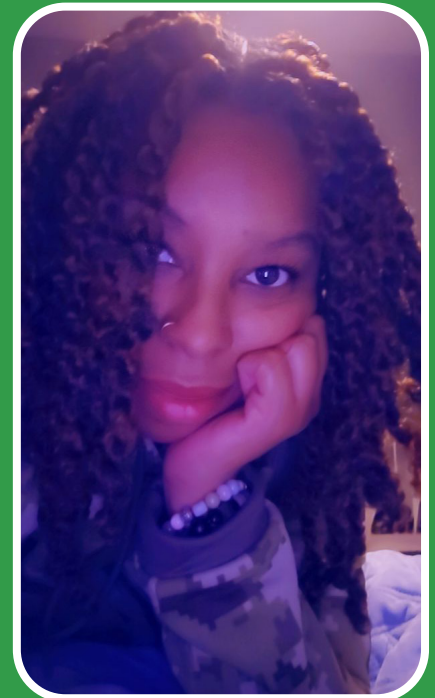
## TIP NUMBER 5. PROTECT YOUR PEACE AT ALL COSTS. KNOW WHEN TO HOLD EM' AND KNOW WHEN TO FOLD EM'.

Recognize when you are being treated poorly and unfairly and then act. If you feel you are being racially profiled or

discriminated against in any way you are not overreacting, sensitive, or my personal favorite being a reverse racist. If no one cares to make changes at your place of employment, and only sees you as the problem you have only one option protect your peace and leave.

In the beginning it can feel intimidating being the token black professional. You might feel like you have to prove that you belong. However, the more aligned you are with yourself, the more you assert your boundaries, and face discrimination and microaggressions head on. The more you know exactly where you belong and you don't fear walking away toward better for yourself and those you help.

### About Author Donnalise Wilson:



Donnalise Wilson is a licensed psychotherapist near the Philadelphia area. She has over a decade of experience helping youth and adolescents with anxiety and depression. Her professional; and personal experience is what drives her to helping others on their journey to healing. She has written a journaling workbook for black professionals, titled: Confessions from a BLACK therapist. She engages in meditation, yoga, and journaling other self care practices in her free time. She plans to establish her own private practice in the nearby future.



## Self-Care Activities You Can Start Right NOW!

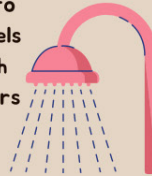
### Go over goals you achieved and write new ones



Writing down things we achieved gives us confidence. It allows us to acknowledge our growth and encourages us to write future goals. Take 5 minutes in the morning to go over your achieved goals and 10 minutes at night to write down future goals.

### Taking a shower

A cold shower sends electronic impulses to the brain provoking alertness energy levels and clarity. Endorphins are released which encourages optimism. Warm to hot showers relaxes our bodies and helps with sleep. Take a cold shower in the morning and a warm to hot shower at night.



### Cooking independently or with someone



Cooking is known as behavior activation. This activity is rewarding because the results can be self-indulging. Also, teaching someone how to cook your favorite dish brings conversation and connection. This also helps you mentally.

### Sleep with weighted blanket

Weighted blankets can help you feel secure and supported. This promotes melatonin and boosts your serotonin levels. Good sleep can improve your mood, anxiety, depression and other mental health diagnosis.



### Reading



There are so many benefits to reading, it provokes education and encourages one to learn a new skill. Whether you are reading for leisure or searching for answers reading motivates your imagination.

Visit [HelpfulLivingMag.com](http://HelpfulLivingMag.com) to learn more





## WHY IT DOES NOT END AT THERAPY: 5 TRUTHS ABOUT HEALING

By Johánna Crystal

**J**anuary marked my sixth anniversary of starting therapy. I told my LCSW: “Thank you for helping me change my life.” She replied, “Thank you—for knowing you needed a change.”

### 1) BOUNDARIES TAKE PRACTICE

Choosing to face what you have lived through—and who you are in the aftermath—takes an immense amount of courage. Healing is beautiful, but it is also an exhausting mess of trial and error. It takes practice to acquire tools and break lifelong cycles. Reinforcement is key.

Listen to your gut. Do not let loneliness or societal norms disrespect what is essential to your spirit. Ask for what you need, and you will be alright.

### 2) YOUR CIRCLE WILL CHANGE

This holds true especially when you made friends during specific phases. Some connections belong to past versions of us. Learning to voice your current needs will frankly weed out people who are unable to meet you where you are. When I first set boundaries, I was met with stark opposition from loved ones. As you do the work, what you tolerate and who you are compatible with shifts too—for the better.

Outgrowing relationships and mourning those losses is normal. While traumatized people tend to gravitate toward each other, the same can be true for those who are healing. Your tribe will find you.

### 3) HUMANS ARE HUMANS

Having trauma—and its accompanying triggers and mood disorders—does not make you a bad person or mean you failed. It makes you human, like those around you.

When I was finally able to discuss the abuse I endured, the way I described people was in one-note extremes. I was taught during my earliest sessions not to vilify those who



mistreated me. What they did is not okay, and what people do actually has nothing to do with you. It is not a punishment you caused; it is a projection of their own unhealed experiences. It is not your responsibility to get others to address, change or even understand their ways, but you can give grace by accepting that duality exists—that people, including yourself, can both do their best and cause harm at the same time. Decide what you want to surround yourself with, because some burdens are just not yours to carry.

## 4) NO ONE THING IS A FIX-ALL

There is no magic pill you can swallow that will mend everything, but continuing to search for what works for you is invariably worth it. It takes time to find compatible resources, therapist, and doctors. It can be understandingly frustrating, especially with the healthcare discrimination Black patients face. Throughout my ongoing quest for a suitable psychotropic prescription, I hit a plethora of road bumps. And then one DNP (Doctor Of Nursing Practice) listened to me. She determined I am very sensitive to medication and require a smaller starting dose. She also informed me of a test where, with a swab of saliva, the lab is able to determine which antidepressants my body processes well or not depending on my genes. This changed the game.

Remember, both good and bad days are customary, and your solutions may look different than someone else's, but you are on nobody's timeline but your own. Rest is vital; there is always a different method to try when you are ready. There is always hope.

## 5) YOU CAN FALL IN LOVE WITH TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

You may not always get it from the sources you hope to, but you deserve love and support at every stage—especially from yourself.

Provide for and invest in your own wellbeing. Say nice things about yourself. Organize your space. Exfoliate your skin. Burn your good candles and wear fancy perfume at home. Apply for that dream job or enroll in that class. Wear that hairstyle you want even if you are unsure you can pull off. Check items off of your bucket list. Drink water. Thrive.

The world has taught us life is too unpredictable to not presently try new things. And life does get better when you leave your house regularly. This could be a simple walk around the block—movement is your friend! Gaze at some trees, soak up the sun. I recently learned Black women naturally have lower Vitamin D levels. Seeking knowledge can help you repair what you did not even know was bothering you all along.

The times when I am alone prove to be my most transformative. Get to know yourself. You may be pleasantly surprised at who you meet.

There is a letter from my therapist now tacked to my bedroom wall. It reads:

*"Dear Johanna,*

*Thank you for rewarding me the great opportunity to experience your growth! May all that follows be as you desire for it will be your design. Keep growing."*

I hope you keep growing too.

### About Johanna Crystal:



Johanna Crystal is the Founder & CEO of Sunny Side Theatre Co, a nonprofit in Sacramento. As a playwright, actor and director, her work focuses on fostering mental health awareness through the creation and representation of Black, Asian-Pacific Islander and multicultural art. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from California State University, Sacramento. For more information, visit [sunnysidetheatre.org](http://sunnysidetheatre.org) and [instagram.com/sunnysidetheatre](https://www.instagram.com/sunnysidetheatre).

# LOVE & ABUNDANCE ADULT COLORING: SELF-CARE BREAK

By Sherita T. Sparrow, The Healing Artist

**“Make your happiness a priority.”  
- Anonymous**

Hello Beautiful Soul!

Let's take a self-care break this month to manifest positive vibes in your life and uncover deeper insights of the heart and soul. Start by finding a quiet and peaceful space where you won't be distracted. Brew yourself a cup of herbal tea or coffee, whichever you prefer so that you can unwind. Play some of your favorite music to create a calming and soothing atmosphere. Next, grab a few colored pencils, markers, or gel pens. Then let go of any worries you might have and start coloring or filling in the shapes on the Love & Abundance Coloring Sheet.

## SYMBOLISM

You'll notice this design features a large heart in the center. The Heart shape is the universal symbol for love, compassion, and devotion. It's all about connecting and embracing your unique qualities.



## SELF-LOVE

As you color, acknowledge your unique qualities... Identify ways you will show yourself more love this month? Embracing your greatness creates positive change.

## PROMPT

Now, complete your design by writing an affirmation using the following prompt:

*"I am cultivating a greater sense of self-love because \_\_\_\_\_."*

## About The Healing Artist

Sherita T. Sparrow, The Healing Artist believes mindful coloring can awaken the soul and offer deeper insight in

oneself. With her NEW! book, The Ultimate Love & Abundance Mandala Coloring Journal, you'll tap into a zen-state of mind, while exploring your creative side.

It's the perfect companion for your self-care journey. With beautiful mandala designs, inspiring quotes, and empowering affirmations, this gorgeous journal will help you cultivate a sense of peace and abundance. Take a break from your busy life and color your way to a calmer and more fulfilled you.

Are you ready to take your self-care to the next level?

Get your copy today and start your journey of self-discovery! The Ultimate Love & Abundance Mandala Coloring Journal is available on Amazon.







# GHOSTING AND RELATIONSHIPS

By Khavah Murray LCSW, CCTP, CGP

**O**k, let's be honest. Dating and relationships in today's modern, post-pandemic, social media focused, astrologically influenced, situationship praising, Google diagnosing, sex and gender fluid, unbothered and scam-tastic society is hard! You can meet someone on-line or at the local Target, start texting, have a few dates, really think you're really hitting it off and then it happens, you're ghosted!

So, what exactly is ghosting? Ghosting is a newer colloquial term for abruptly ending a relationship without communicating why and often without warning. Imagine you're in a relationship, long-term or casual, and without warning your partner disappears. No texts, ignored calls, no drama and blocked on all social media platforms like you never had a connection. In your mind you're wondering if something has happened to them; are they dealing with a crisis or maybe they broke their phone? Nope, nope and nope, ghosted!

Ghosting isn't exclusive to romantic and dating relationships. It can also happen in friendships, families and with co-workers. In these relationships the "ghoster" recognizes that the relationship is toxic or unhealthy and the "ghostee" refuses to acknowledge this, change behaviors or address issues. In these instances, ghosting is setting a boundary based on self-preservation and protecting their peace. The ghoster may have also made attempts to save the relationship and ghosting was their last option. Being ghosted by a friend or family member can be devastating because these bonds are deep. It's okay to feel anger as long as it does not become toxic for you or the ghoster. Processing the loss of a relationship mimics the grief and bereavement process associated with losing a loved one. Eventually you will get to a point of acceptance and learn how to live a healthy life without them being present.

You've been ghosted while dating, now what? Ghosting can leave you feeling hurt, confused, rejected and in some instances traumatized. If you have struggled with self-esteem or abandonment issues, being ghosted may trigger and bring these issues to the forefront. There is no magic solution for dealing with being ghosted, but there are a few things you can do and keep in mind while processing the situation.

Don't take it personal. Often the act of ghosting has more to do with the ghoster and not the ghostee. You are still valuable, capable and deserving of healthy relationships. Now is the time to make room for them.

Don't continue to reach out for closure. With any break-up, the message you're looking for is in the break-up. Calling or texting repeatedly is not ok, it is actually pushing the ghoster to make it







harder for you to be in contact with them. Maintain your dignity and behave in a way that is aligned with your morals and values.

Accept their decision, as hard as that may be, and move on. The fact that your ex chose to ghost you, tells you everything you need to know about them and how they communicate with difficult topics.

Talk to a therapist. Depending on your history with self-esteem, relationships and abandonment; it may be helpful to enlist the help of a therapist to help you process and cope with being ghosted.

In my private practice, Hope Deals Counseling & Consulting, I offer relationship counseling to couples, friends and families that want to enhance the quality of their relationships and communication. In doing this work, we regularly discuss patterns and

communication styles in previous relationships. When ghosting comes up most clients say that they've done it to avoid an argument or being convinced to continue in the relationship, being immature, not wanting to hurt the other person's feelings, being uncomfortable with their truth or they ghost because they've been ghosted. As we move towards healing from ghosting situations it's important to reflect on ourselves and the possibility that we've been toxic, critical, hurtful or ignored our partner's, friend's and family's needs. The bottom line is communication is key for healthy relationships to thrive and be long lasting.

### About Khavah Murray, LCSW, CCTP, CGP:

Khavah Murray, LCSW, CCTP, CGP is the owner of Hope Deals Counseling & Consulting, a virtual private practice serving individuals across the lifespan who want to achieve their optimal self. Ms. Murray has over 15 years of experience as a Social Worker providing mental health treatment to children, adolescents and families, working in school based treatment programs, community crisis teams, nonprofit leadership and advocating for

affordable housing. Your "Hope Deal" is your commitment to healing and working towards a healthier you. Ms. Murray encourages those interested in her services to schedule a consultation at [www.hopedeals.net](http://www.hopedeals.net) and to follow her on social media @hopedealspgh for weekly affirmations and tips to stay mentally well.



# Embrace Your Wellness

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank below.

Y C A B F I N C R E D B L E  
H P O E E N U K F X V F A O G  
O A Y A A H H U L H Z Z L U N  
S S Y M R D U Z W Q W F R C A  
P S M I L W X J P Z M X U H R  
I I A N E N R I C H I N G A L  
T O J G S E E W D I A Y U R Y  
A N E K S O P T I M I S T I C  
B A S J Q J N B Y E T E K S J  
L T T A F F A B I L I T Y M O  
E E I N Z I V R M C L E M A Y  
T Y C O A W E H Q H B G X T S  
T R V B Y J P S R W P K D I O  
X Y C L D I G N I F I E D C M  
W K E E N G E H N C R U V K E

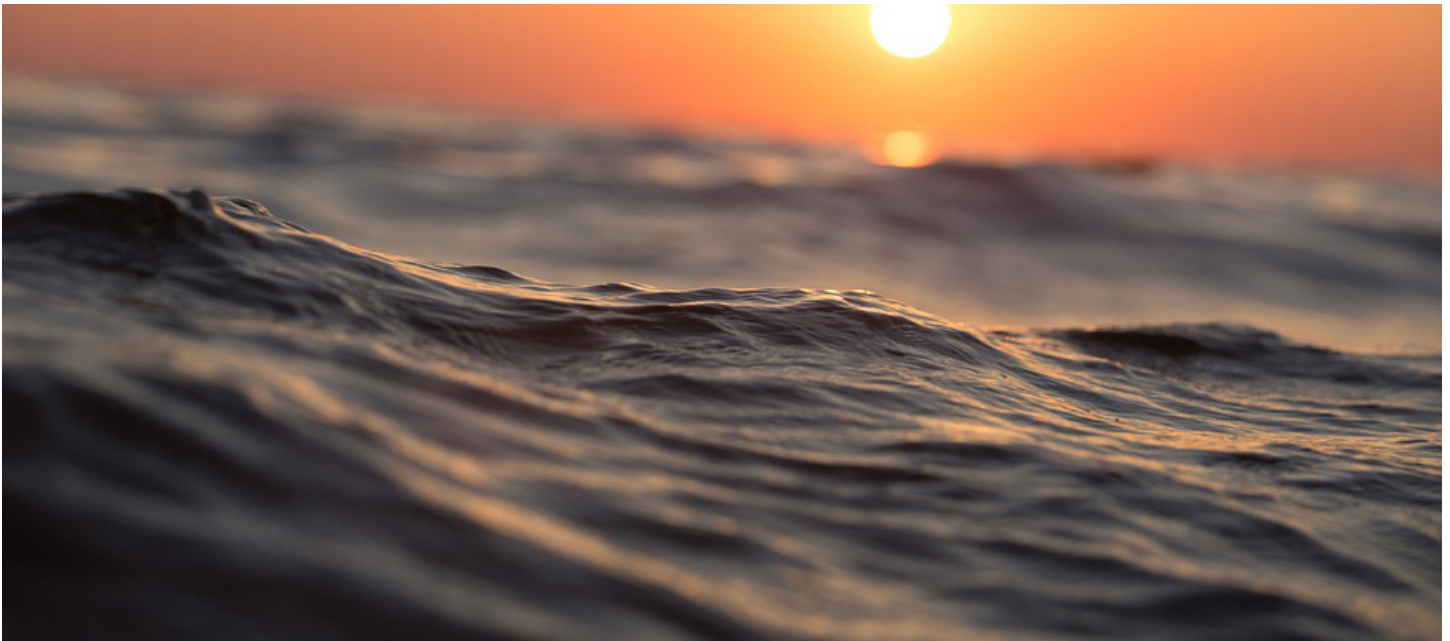
## Word Bank

- |                |              |               |              |                |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Affability  | 4. Dignified | 7. Gnarly     | 10. Joysome  | 13. Noble      |
| 2. Beaming     | 5. Enriching | 8. Hospitable | 11. Keen     | 14. Optimistic |
| 3. Charismatic | 6. Fearless  | 9. Incredible | 12. Majestic | 15. Passionate |









typically, the only requirement that makes one ineligible is not meeting an age requirement or not being a resident of the geographical city in which the crisis house resides. Crisis houses exist for both youth and adults. Most crisis houses are short-term in nature. Those served for the two in the District of Columbia can stay 3-14 days.

#### **HL: What are the benefits to a crisis center?**

**VB:** Crisis houses serve as a diversion program. Research has shown that individuals with known or unknown mental health disorders often use inpatient psychiatric services more or are arrested than those with no known mental health diagnosis. Suppose we take a deeper dive through a racial lens. In that case, individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color in urban and rural communities see significantly higher numbers of these disparities. Crisis houses offer space for individuals to receive 24/7 intensive support to stabilize psychiatric crises, a smaller number of beds, and a home-like environment. Some research suggests that crisis houses offer the benefits of greater autonomy and social connection than inpatient care. Crisis houses are sometimes the catalytic step for an individual to engage in mental health services for the first time.

#### **HL: What can family members and supporters do if their loved one is admitted, how should they support them?**

**VB:** As crisis houses are often short-term in nature, family members and supporters can support a loved one through visitation, education, and with permission of their loved one, joining in on treatment and discharge planning. The excellent staff that supports these programs celebrate and encourage persons served to continue their mental health recovery, resilience, and stabilization once they leave and return to the community. Loved ones and supporters play a pivotal role in this.

#### **HL: What are some myths about crisis centers?**

**VB:** Well, crisis houses are underutilized by people walking through life feeling alone, scared, and needing rest and support. Crisis houses are also under-researched, so their actual benefits and effectiveness as a mental health intervention have yet to be

discovered. Many believe that crisis houses are shelters for housing insecurity/instability. While a consumer's current housing situation could lead to high distress, housing insecurity does not speak to medical necessity and cannot be a primary reason for referral.

**Mental Moment:** Your body keeps the score. It shows up for you in more ways than you may imagine. Give yourself grace and self-compassion when you are tired and need to rest. There is still movement in stillness, and there is power in restoration. Choose YOU!

### **About Vanessa Banks:**



While anchoring herself within strengths-based, existential, and person-centered frameworks, Vanessa has a great passion for joining an individual's journey for healing and witnessing them achieve more fulfilling lives. Throughout Vanessa's many years of experience, she has learned the power of listening and how it aids in developing and building transformative platforms and bridges for some of the most challenging experiences and environments, such as substance use, trauma, poverty, and community violence. Currently, Vanessa serves as the Program Director for one of two crisis stabilization programs in the District of Columbia.



## Let's Write it Out!

Journaling is one of many ways people express themselves. Some people use a notebook or purchase a journal and start with how they are feeling. Others may use prompts to help them with a sense of direction on what to write. Here at Helpful Living Magazine we want to help our readers especially during those rough days. Grab a pen and your journal or some paper and let's get started!

*Some prompts can be triggering and if so feel free to skip it.*

### Writing Prompts:

- 1 Write about a time where you solved a problem and felt good about it.
- 2 Describe when you were anxious, who helped you and what was the outcome? What did you learn about yourself regarding that situation?
- 3 Write about a time where you had a great day.
- 4 What are you concerned about? Write down what is bothering you.
- 5 Where do you want to be in the next 3, 6, and 9 months?
- 6 Write about a time that someone called you and thanked you for something. Describe the situation and how it made you feel.
- 7 Who is your support system? Think of the person(s) you call in dire situations, who can you depend on to help you when you are feeling down, or when you want to share good news?
- 8 What triggers you? Write this down and share it with your support system.
- 9 Describe what a good day is to you.
- 10 Where is your favorite place to go when you are not feeling your best self? Describe how that place makes you feel and why?

Genuinely  
happy for  
you when  
good things  
happen

Someone who shows up for you

## HOW TO

IDENTIFY YOUR  
SUPPORT

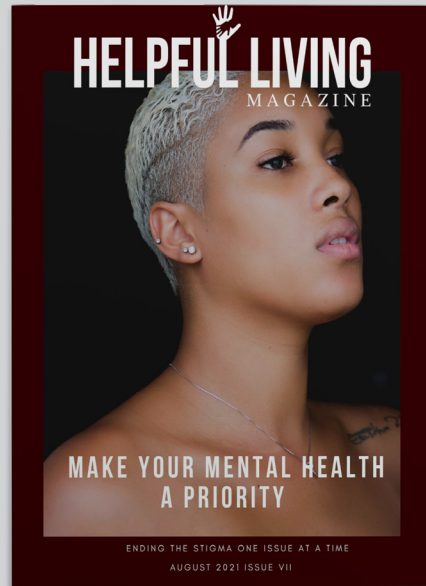
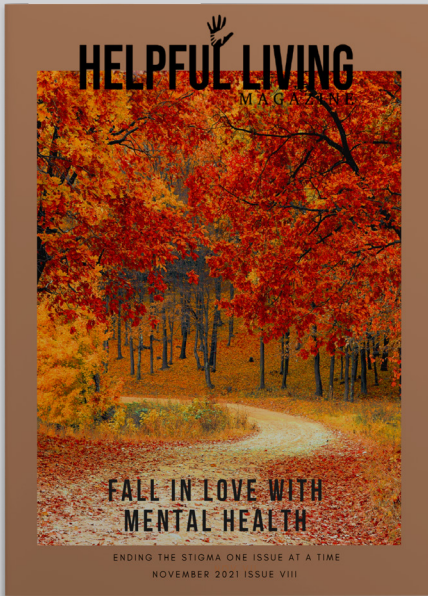
@helpfullivingmag

Who does not  
pass judgement

Share  
vulnerable  
moments with  
you

Who will listen and allow you to  
express yourself





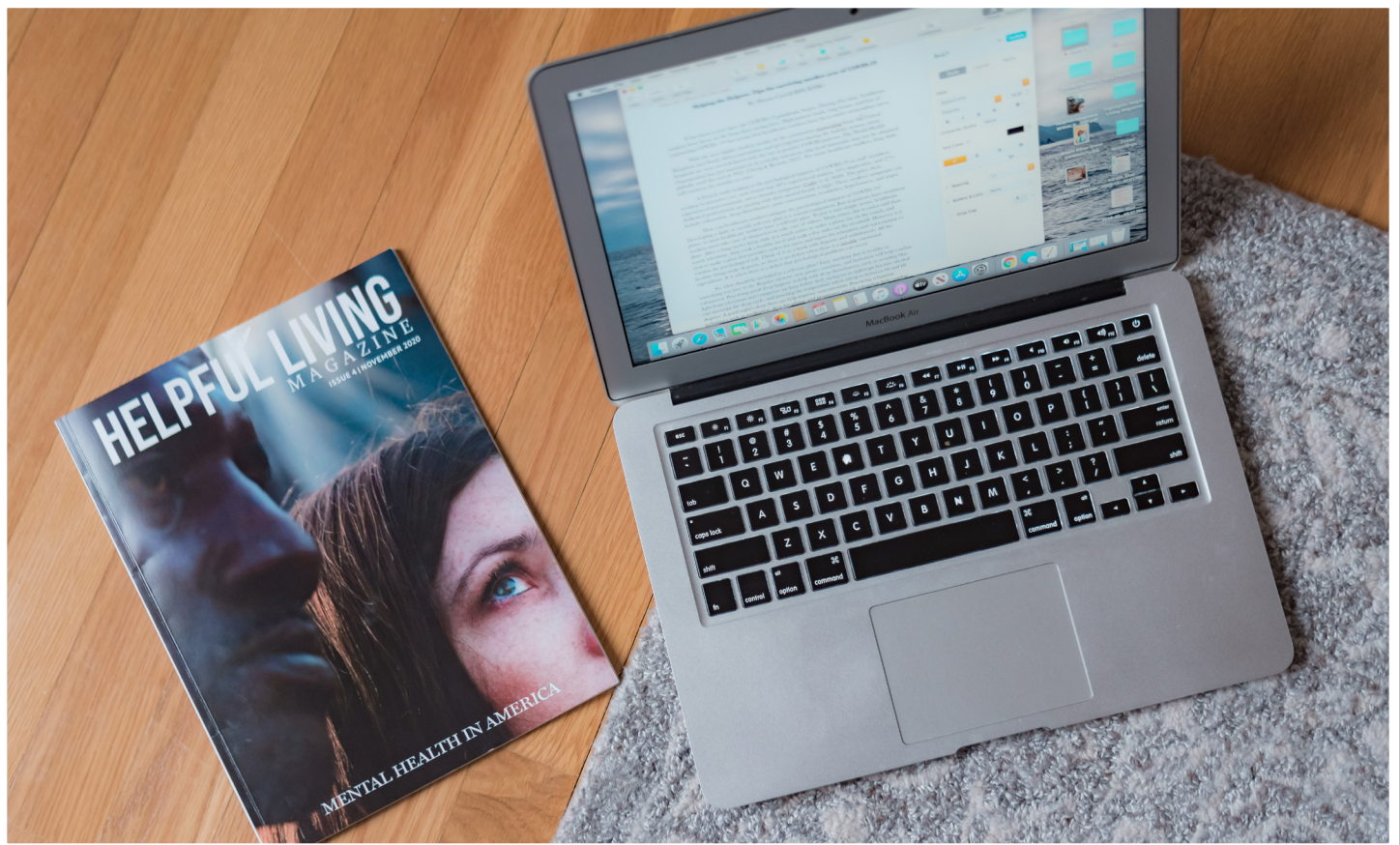
If you know anyone who can benefit from

# Helpful Living Magazine,

send this QR code to them. Our goal is to spread mental health awareness and provide mental health education. If you feel this magazine has been beneficial to you, spread the word and share this QR Code today!







We are growing our Resource Page. If you are a clinician or know a clinician that would like to be featured in our Resource Section scan the QR code below. Come grow with us as we help end the stigma one issue at a time!





# RESOURCE PAGE

**H**elpful Living Magazine is beyond excited to start a resource page! Our issues are getting recognized and it only makes sense to help our readers locate mental health providers. Below are a list of clinicians in certain areas that you can contact if you, or someone you know is seeking treatment. Check them out and visit their website. Some clinicians have blogs and other resources you can indulge in as you learn more about mental health and wellness. If you would like to add your practice to our Resource Page send us an email at [info@helpfullivingmag.com](mailto:info@helpfullivingmag.com) and find out how!



## All Walks of Life (AWL)

AWL serves Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard County, Prince George's County, and Washington, DC

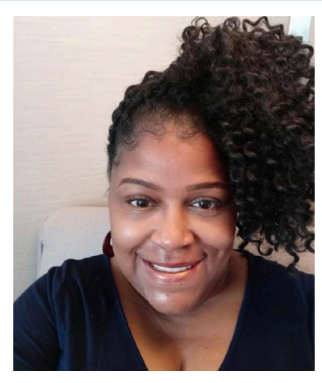
Services: Outpatient Mental Health Clinic (OMHC), Medication Management, Health Home, Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS), Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (PRP), and Substance Abuse Counseling

## Maryland location

107 E. 25th Street  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
P: (410) 558-0019

## DC location

220 I Street NE  
Suite 250  
Washington, DC 20002  
P: (202) 290-2344  
[www.allwalksoflife.org](http://www.allwalksoflife.org)  
Insurance: Medicaid (Medical Assistance), BCBS, and Aetna



## Debra Anthony LPC

Talk It Out Counseling Services  
11650 New Halls Ferry Road,  
Florissant, Mo. 63033  
P: (314) 695-0007  
<https://tiocs.com/>  
Email: [debra.anthony314@gmail.com](mailto:debra.anthony314@gmail.com)  
Serving the state of Missouri from ages 4 to adults  
Insurance: United Health-Care, self-pay, sliding scale.



## Dr. A. Monique Leslie, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist  
PsychConnectOnline by Privy Oasis, LLC  
Southlake, Texas  
P: 1-833-ON-PSYCH  
[www.PsychConnectOnline.com](http://www.PsychConnectOnline.com)  
Serving Children, Adolescents, and Adults in the states of Texas, California, and Delaware  
Self-Pay



## Dr. Josephine Harris, LPCC, CA-I, NLC, PCELC

CEO/Founder of Calming Minds LLC  
Green Heart Mental Health Coach and Advocate  
Board Certified Telehealth Professional Level I  
Psychologist at Seoul Counseling Center  
401 Broadway  
Suite 100  
Tacoma, WA 98402  
P: (253) 260-2258  
Email: [dr.josephineharris5@gmail.com](mailto:dr.josephineharris5@gmail.com)  
Email: [josephineharris@seoulcounseling.com](mailto:josephineharris@seoulcounseling.com)  
Self-pay



## Dr. La Keita Carter

Institute for HEALing, LLC  
9419 Common Brook Road Suite 208  
Owings Mills, MD 21117  
P: (410) 864-0211 Ext. 0  
[www.myiHEAL.com](http://www.myiHEAL.com)  
Insurance: Aetna, Amerigroup, Carefirst (Blue Cross Blue Shield), Cigna, Humana, Magellan, Maryland Physicians Care, Medstar Family Choice, Medicaid (Medical Assistance), Medicare, Optum, Priority Partners, Tricare



**Dr. Sade Dunn**

Methods Therapy, LLC.  
9015 Woodyard Road Suite 203  
Clinton, MD 20735  
P: (301) 899-6222  
F: (833) 211-2341  
www.methodstherapy.com  
Email: admin@methodstherapyllc.com  
Insurance: Carefirst, Cigna and UHC  
Now Hiring 2 licensed therapist at our location!



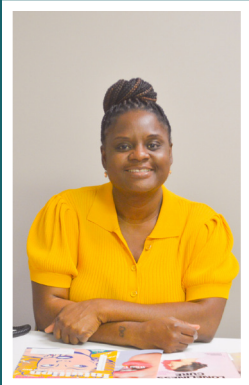
**Eletta Cameron, LCSW, ACSW**

Cameron's Counseling & Consulting Services, LLC  
3506 Main Street, Suite 2, Munhall, PA, 15120  
P: (412) 403-8196  
cameron-consulting.net  
Insurance: UPMC, Highmark, Cigna



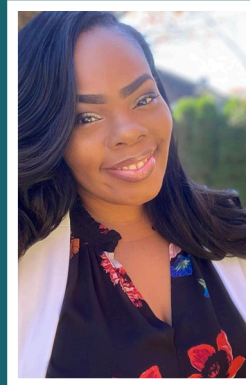
**Gabrielle Williams, LMFTA**

S.O.U.L Therapy, LLC  
P: (205) 286-2022  
Servicing Alabama Residence  
www.soultherapyllc.com  
Email: gabriellewilliams@soultherapyllc.com  
Selfpay



**Iyea Brandy**

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**Jessica Gurley, LCSW**

Social Work Consulting & Counseling  
Pittsburgh, PA  
P: 412.204.6934  
Website: <https://swcc.help/>  
Email: info@swcchelp.com  
Insurance: BCBS, Highmark, UPMC, Selfpay



**Kezzia Quintyne-Hilaire, LMHC & CASAC**

KQH Mental Health Counseling P.L.L.C.  
Teletherapy services in New York  
Website: <https://www.kqhcounseling.com>  
Email: info@kqhcounseling.com  
Insurance: Aetna, Humana, United Healthcare, Oxford, Out-of-Network, Self-Pay and Sliding scale



**Mekea C. Anderson, LCSW-C, LICSW**

Assurance Therapeutic Services, LLC  
14605 Elm Street #1208  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20773  
P: (301) 543-7456  
<http://assurancetherapeuticservices.com>  
Insurance: Aetna, Beacon Health Options, CareFirst BCBS, Cigna Johns Hopkins Healthcare, Maryland Medicaid, Military One Source United Healthcare, & Self-pay



**Sandra L. Thompson Parent Coach**

Differently Abled Life Skills Specialist, Functional Interventionist  
1507 Huguenot Road, Suite 203 Midlothian VA 23113  
P: (804) 683-2965  
[www.SandraLThompson.com](http://www.SandraLThompson.com)



**Shannell Batiste, LPC**

Choosing Empowerment, LLC  
Virtual Mental Health Therapy serving Texas and Louisiana  
P: (512) 621-7599  
<https://www.choosingempowerment.com>  
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