MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

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   By Melvin D. Ways OMS-III

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2022
“WE DON’T TALK ABOUT….YOU KNOW.”

In this renaissance era of identifying the importance of mental health and wellness, a large portion of cultural significance is placed on the suppression of emotions; whether to show strength, have thick skin, or otherwise indoctrinated into an unwillingness to explore negative feelings. In many of the leading academic psychology studies, Asian cultures have been the topic of inquiry, however, many underrepresented cultures can be observed passing this emotional baggage. Hence, the allusion to a popular song and underlying theme of a recently popular children’s film about a Colombian family with generational emotional burdens. (We Need to Talk About Bruno: What Encanto Tells Us About Intergenerational Trauma)

According to the National Institute of Mental Health , nearly one in five U.S. adults live with mental illness (52.9 million in 2020). With this type of prevalence, exacerbated by stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would appear that conversations about mental health wellness would be as abundant as “how’s the weather”. Despite the ubiquity of stressors, the introspective vulnerability to acknowledge these feelings are not so common and available treatments are even harder to find. Oddly enough, many adults comprehend and utilize the mature defense mechanism of suppression.

Suppression: Conscious process that involves purposely ignoring unacceptable impulses or emotions to accomplish a task.

However, more work needs to be done to demystify the conversations and emotions around mental health in the general public. Interestingly enough, one analogy is simple enough to help even the most reluctant stoic to explore their feelings. A professor holds up a glass of water, arm fully stretched, and asks his class “how much does the glass weigh?”. This analogy is an example of how holding on to emotions/feelings may be easy initially however as time passes holding that weight becomes more difficult.

So what lies beyond suppressing these feelings?

The type of levity that comes from being vulnerable isn’t only found in expressing our deepest feelings rather it lies in actively seeking opportunities to have a way to maximize mature coping mechanisms. Simply having the conversation about mental health wellness in a normalized way can decrease stigma. The more we explore, the more tools we find to adapt to stress. Cognitive reframing techniques with a trained mental health professional is an ultimate goal to augment this practice. Starting with yourself you may realize what things you may have been holding in what may have been draining your energy. Protect your energy, love yourself and disperse altruistically.

Thanks for reading.
Sincerely,
Melvin D. Ways OMS-III

*All thoughts or opinions provided in this column are solely that of the writer and do not reflect that of any institution. This is not intended to provide any medical advice, or substitute clinical decision making and has NOT been provided/approved by a licensed medical professional. If you have an emergent mental health crisis please contact your nearest emergency room or health care provider immediately**
A new chapter of Medical Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses at RowanSOM

"MSDCI is a nationally recognized, student-led organization leading the discussion on mental health and disabilities that primarily supports medical students suffering from Chronic Medical Conditions as they receive their undergraduate, graduate, and professional medical training. This initiative also includes spreading awareness, acceptance, and support for those who may suffer from other conditions that affect their individual learning processes, such as depression and anxiety. As well as neurodivergent disorders including Autism, ADHD, and other specific learning disorders. Our chapter at RowanSOM is supporting students through social support groups, awareness campaigns, and community service events that directly benefit members who suffer from both mental and physical handicaps."

Isaiah Pinkerton, OMS-I, MS
Rowan SOM: MSDCI Club President
Rowan SOM Class of 2025
"Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have contributed significantly to many facets of American culture and society, including science and medicine."

"In the 1940s and 1950s, Chinese-born physicist Chien-Shiung Wu, Ph.D., was instrumental in the developing field of atomic science. Specifically, she improved existing technology for the detection of radiation and the enrichment of uranium in large quantities."

"Throughout her 30-year career, Filipino American physician and pediatric immunologist Katherine Luzuriaga, M.D., has made significant contributions to our understanding of persistent viral infections in children. In 2014, Luzuriaga and her colleague Deborah Persaud, M.D., were credited with being behind the first well-documented case of an HIV-infected child being functionally cured of the infection."

Courtesy of: https://www.history.com/news/asian-american-inventions-contributions
PODCASTS OF INTEREST

Doctors Under the Radar Podcast

"Doctors Under the Radar (Doc U R)" is committed to being the most trusted mental health gateway for empowering healthcare leaders to make high-impact solutions, anticipate and mitigate doctors' burnout and suicide attempts, and heighten awareness to eliminate stigmas in the workplace.

To learn more click the link below:

https://docur.my.canva.site/

Yeah No, I'm Not OK Podcast

"Yeah No, I'm Not Ok", a new podcast by Diane Guerrero in collaboration with LAist Studios, is here to open up the conversation about mental health. Every week we will explore issues that youth face all over the world (addiction, depression, anxiety, suicide, radical self-love, and much much more) through conversations with friends, colleagues, activists, artists, and health care professionals, all people who have gone through something life-changing and are now healing from it.

To learn more click the link below:

https://laist.com/podcasts/yeah-no
SELF CARE TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Examining your own habits is an important first step in developing a self-care plan. When faced with increased demands, we can use either positive or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each. Which strategies do you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow breathing</td>
<td>Snapping or lashing out at others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to music</td>
<td>Smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising</td>
<td>Working through breaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness or meditation</td>
<td>Skipping meals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading for pleasure</td>
<td>Drinking alcohol to excess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecting with others</td>
<td>Withdrawal from friends and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in a hobby</td>
<td>Bottling emotions up</td>
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</table>

It’s important to be honest when evaluating your behaviors. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or angry, snappy with others, or unable to switch off the worries, it may be time to re-evaluate your coping skills.

ARTICLES OF INTEREST


Link:

Compounded Disparities: Health Equity at the Intersection of Disability, Race, and Ethnicity - Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund. (2018, January 19)

Link:

‘You Have to Scream Out.’ The Atlantic.

Link: