



Know! July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that people who identify as a member of a minority are less likely to receive a diagnosis of and treatment for mental illness, have less access to mental health services, and often receive a poorer quality of mental health care. These factors negatively impact mental health outcomes, including the risk for suicide and depression.

According to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) and the [CDC](#):

- In 2017, among youth aged 12–17 in the U.S., 13.3 percent had at least one major depressive episode in the past year including 9.5 percent of non-Hispanic blacks, 13.8 percent of Hispanics, and 16.3 percent of American Indian or Alaska Native.
- African American females, grades 9–12, were 70 percent more likely to attempt suicide in 2017, as compared to non-Hispanic white females of the same age. At the same time, African American males, grades 9–12, were nearly three times more likely to die by suicide in 2017 than African American females.
- Feelings of anxiety and other signs of stress may become more pronounced during a global pandemic.
- People in some racial and ethnic minority groups may respond more strongly to the stress of

a pandemic or crisis.

In addition to dealing with the stress and angst that COVID-19 has brought about, African American youth may experience increased anxiety and anguish due to the terrible losses of countless black lives and constantly seeing images of those losses on social media.

Now more than ever, it is vital to have conversations with our African American children to gauge how they are feeling and check in on their mental well-being, assuring them that we are here to help them manage and ease any distress they may be experiencing.

[Watch for These Warning Signs](#)

It is also critical for parents and other caregivers to recognize the signs that their child may be struggling. **If your child shows one or more of the following behaviors, it is time to seek help from a mental health care provider or other health care professional:**

- Feeling incredibly sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Threatening or trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so (Take all threats or attempts as serious. It's also important to note here that asking your child about self-harm does not increase his/her risk for suicide. Instead, it can provide you with insight regarding their intentions and how they are feeling. [See Know! The Facts on Youth Suicide for more information.](#))
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Getting in many fights or wanting to hurt others
- Showing severe, out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to make himself or herself lose weight
- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Experiencing extreme difficulty controlling behavior, putting oneself in physical danger or causing problems at home (or at school if applicable)
- Using drugs or alcohol repeatedly
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality

While these behavioral red flags are consistent regardless of race or cultural background, the risk for these signs may be escalated in our African American children due to current events.

Seek immediate assistance if you think your child is in danger of harming themselves or others. You can call a crisis line or the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

If your child is in need of community mental health services you can [find help in your area](#).

Sources

[MentalHealth.gov: Talk About Mental Health. Sept. 2017.](#)

[National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health. Mental Health While Combating Systemic Racism and Social Injustice. July 2020.](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Behavioral Health Barometer, U.S. Vol. 5. 2017.](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health: National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, July 2020.](#)

About Know! Teachable Moments

Everyone has a role in prevention. By reading this Know! Teachable Moment today, you're doing your part to prevent substance misuse and create a healthier world for all.

We created these free tips to empower teachers and educators like you to protect your students from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. However, we rely on donations from people like you to provide these tips. If you found this tip interesting or helpful, [please consider donating at preventionactionalliance.org/donate](https://preventionactionalliance.org/donate).

Know! Teachable Moments are provided by Prevention Action Alliance with support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, the Ohio Department of Education, and Start Talking!.

[Know! Parent Tips are also available in Spanish at the Know! archives.](#)

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