
Racism and Mental Health

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What is Racism?

Racism can come in many different forms. Racism can be defined as prejudice, discrimination and/or hatred directed towards an individual(s) of a different race/ethnicity.

Racism also intersects with various other forms of oppression, such as gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, etc.



2 Overt and Covert forms of Racism >>>

Many individuals of racialized groups experience both overt (macro-aggression) and covert (micro-aggression) expressions of racism.

Macro-aggression involves acts of racism towards all members of a racial/ethnic group. This may include generalizing or making assumptions of a specific race/ethnicity, hate crimes, etc.

On the other hand, micro-aggression is subtle and indirect. It involves everyday forms of verbal and non-verbal behaviour that communicates negative or offensive attitudes toward marginalized groups.



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The effects of Racism on Mental Health



- An increased risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues
- An increased risk of suicide
- Trauma (both past and present) and possible Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- An increased risk of substance abuse
- Constant feelings of fear, panic, and stress
- Internalized beliefs
- Mental (and physical) strain and exhaustion
- An increase in self-consciousness
- Feelings of shame

As an East Asian, you may have had people make fun of your accent, of the food you eat, your physical features, or your culture.

As a child of immigrants growing up in two different cultures, you may be subjected to very different expectations from other people. It can be difficult to fit in and find where you belong.



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How do I cope?

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

Self-compassion – acknowledge that the feelings and thoughts you have are valid and justified.

Process your emotions – it is important to allow yourself to feel your emotions. Writing in a journal, talking to someone with similar experiences or a therapist are some ways that may help.

Surround yourself with people who love and value you – establish a positive support system with family and friends who recognize your value.

Remind yourself that you are not to blame for the racism you experience.

Remind yourself of the positive traits you have and think about the things that make you proud of *you*.

