How to Care for Yourself & Others Amid Race-Based Stress

COPING WITH RACIAL TRAUMA
HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF & OTHERS AMID RACE-BASED STRESS

C

CREATE SPACE FOR HEALING

Remember, it’s common to have a myriad of reactions and emotions from racial trauma, including negative thoughts about the world, others, or even yourself. It’s normal to feel unsafe and the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of racial violence are also typical.

Make lists of your strengths and remind yourself of your self-worth. Create personal mantras and affirmations to feel empowered and encouraged (e.g., “I belong here. I am valuable,” and “I am loved”) in order to build your sense of self despite the negative feelings that racial trauma evokes.

When racial violence escalates, it’s not unusual to think “that could have been me,” a loved one, or a friend. As you reflect during this painful time, embrace the agency you have by telling those you love and care about what they mean to you.

A

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

Know that feeling anger, grief, fear, anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, powerlessness, and the unpredictable can be experienced as racial trauma. Be patient and allow yourself to experience these emotions.

Notice any mixed emotions. Physical reactions, negative thoughts, and emotional responses are common reactions to racial trauma. Allow yourself to feel.

Vicarious trauma is real. Hearing about or seeing racial trauma secondhand can often lead to the same emotions and reactions as experiencing it directly. Allow yourself the time to mourn those impacted even. If you don’t know them or have a personal relationship with them.

R

REJUVENATE YOUR SOUL

Incorporate mindfulness into your daily routine using free mental health apps that offer meditation and relaxation, and deep breathing exercises, or journal about your thoughts and feelings. Embrace your racial/cultural heritage by engaging in activities that promote your racial/ethnic pride (e.g., cultural family traditions, language events, and traditional food)

Connect with others and schedule collective-care activities (e.g., check-ins, debriefing, share playlists, work sessions) with others. Validate their experience and make a pact to support each other through racial trauma incidents.

Prevent re-traumatization by not rewatching or re-reading graphic traumatic images that may be triggering for you and others and instead point a link to a more article (narrative, journal, or text). For example, “PreparedStatement” when you need to maintain a healthy well-being and to minimize your emotional distress.

E

EVOLVE & PROMOTE CHANGE

Reflect on how you have overcome past racial trauma and focus on thriving to thrive each day. Decide on a mental plan for how to respond effectively during predictable race-related current stressors. Discuss these strategies with your family and friends.

Be gracious and patient towards yourself and others during racial-related stressors and try to adjust to the situation. Such cognitive and emotional flexibility fosters positive mental well-being and coping especially during a time of racial trauma.

Establish a structure and predictability to your routine. Solve the things you can’t change and focus on what you can control. Stay grounded by practicing mindfulness. Notice your sensory experiences in the moment and describe the sensations.

Rechannel your painful feelings to foster positive change by participating in social justice activities for your greater good (e.g., community organizations, peaceful protest marches). Derive meaning from race-based incidents such as determining what you value most and enhancing your sense of purpose. 