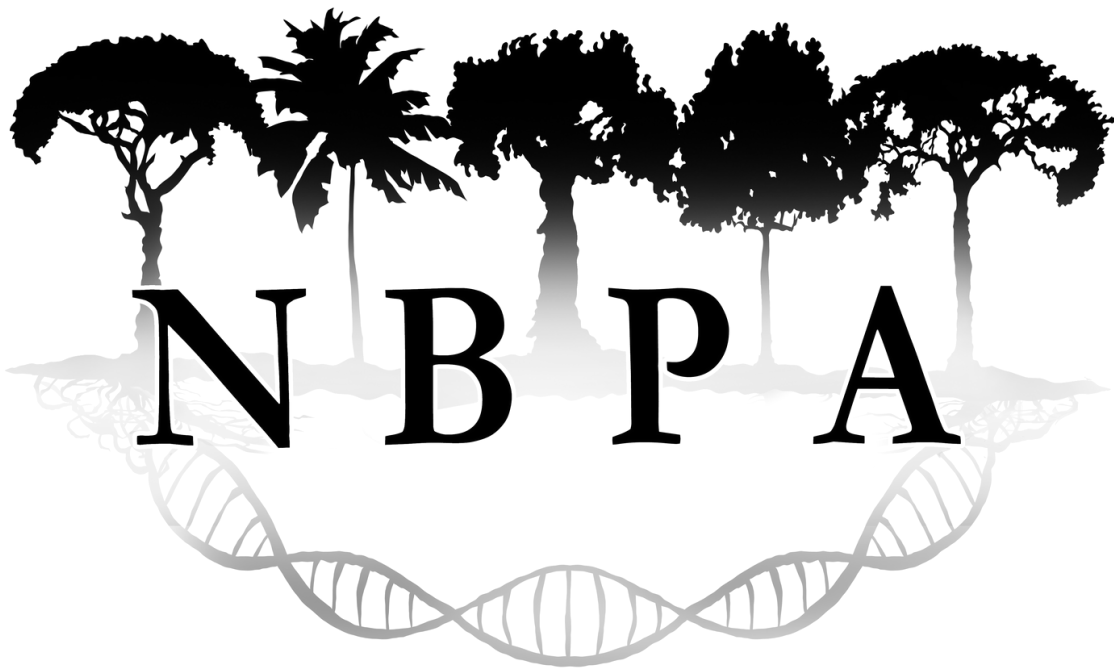


Mental Health Manual



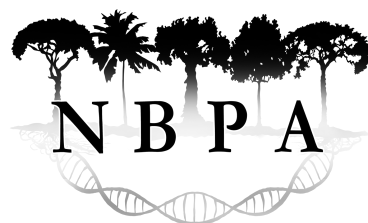
© 2023

The **National Black Postdoctoral Association (NBPA)**, formed in 2020, is an organization committed to ensuring the professional success of black postdoctoral fellows. The NBPA provides a space for the exchange of information and opportunities that will enhance the social well-being, research advancement, and professional development of its members. Today, we have over 415 members that have appointments at over 81 academic, industry, and governmental institutions throughout the United States.

The **NBPA** was officially incorporated and became a non-profit organization in March of 2021, with Dr. Frankie D. Heyward as the Founding President. The NBPA ESP was launched in Spring 2023 with Cellas Hayes, PhD, as the inaugural chair. This manual was created in assistance from Almarely Berrios, MS.

Contact us at:

members@nationalblackpostdoc.com



© 2023

Content:

Why is mental health important?.....	1
Ways to maintain and improve mental health.....	2
How to identify someone who is depressed.....	3
How to identify someone who is anxious.....	4
Stress versus anxiety.....	5
What are suicidal feelings?.....	6
What are some suicide red flags?.....	7
Helping someone who is suicidal?.....	8-9
What is a support plan?.....	10
How to create a support plan.....	11
References.....	12

Why is mental health important?

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, make choices, and relate to others. Mental health is more than the absence of a mental illness—it's essential to your overall health and quality of life (NIH, 2022).

Mental health impacts **EVERY** aspect of your life. Good mental health improves your interactions and interpersonal relationships in both professional and personal lives. Also, when we take care of our mental health, we can adequately manage the stress we feel every day and the obstacles we face. Therefore, maintaining a good mental health helps you to be more productive at work and on your daily life. But remember that breaks are necessary.

NBPA

© 2023

Common ways to maintain and improve mental health

- **Regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep (7-8 hours per night).
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. For example, you can start to practice the technique called '*deep breathing*'.
- **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do. Establish short and long term goals while being realistic with your time.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down at night, or replay them in your mind.
- **Focus on positivity.** Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.

NBPA

© 2023

How to identify someone who is depressed

Depression

The symptoms of depression can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, schoolwork, and relationships.

Common symptoms of depression include:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, or being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and that do not ease even with treatment
- **Suicide attempts or thoughts of death or suicide**

NBPA

© 2023

How to identify someone who is anxious

Anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, schoolwork, and relationships.

Common symptoms of these disorders include:

- Feeling restless, wound-up, or on-edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being irritable
- Having headaches, muscle aches, stomachaches, or unexplained pains
- Difficulty controlling feelings of worry
- Having sleep problems, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Blushing, sweating, or trembling
- Pounding or racing heart
- Stomachaches
- Rigid body posture or speaking with an overly soft voice
- Difficulty making eye contact or being around people they don't know
- Feelings of self-consciousness or fear that people will judge them negatively

NBPA

© 2023

Stress versus Anxiety

What is stress? Stress is the physical or mental response to an external cause, such as having a lot of homework or having an illness. A stressor may be a one-time or short-term occurrence, or it can happen repeatedly over a long time.

What is anxiety? Anxiety is your body's reaction to stress and can occur even if there is no current threat.

If that anxiety doesn't go away and begins to interfere with your life, it could affect your health. You could experience problems with sleeping, or with your immune, digestive, cardiovascular, and reproductive systems. You also may be at higher risk for developing a mental illness.

Stress	Stress & Anxiety	Anxiety
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response to an external cause.• Goes away once the situation is resolved.• Can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire to meet a deadline, or it may cause you a person to lose sleep.	<p>The person may experience symptoms such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excessive worry• Uneasiness• Tension• Headaches or body pain• High blood pressure• Loss of sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal, meaning it's your reaction to stress.• Involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away.• Is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

NBPA

© 2023

What are suicidal feelings?

Suicide Hotlines: 9-8-8 / 9-1-1

Suicidal feelings can vary from preoccupations of thoughts that come from both abstract and specific feelings of thinking that people would be better off without you. Suicidal feelings are often accompanied by making clear plans to take their own life.

The type of suicidal feelings people have varies person to person, especially regarding to:

- **intensity** – suicidal feelings can be more overwhelming for some people than others (and that is okay!). They can build up gradually or be intense from the start, and they can be more or less severe at different times and may change quickly.
- **duration** – suicidal feelings can sometimes pass quickly, but may still be very intense. They can also come and go, or last for a long time.

NBPA

© 2023

What are some suicide red flags?

Suicide Hotlines: 9-8-8 / 9-1-1

- Expressing guilt or shame
- No hope for the future
- Extreme sadness or agitation
- Chronic feelings of emptiness and loneliness
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Recent abrupt mood/behavioral changes
- Self-loathing and self-hatred
- Withdrawing from friends
- Taking dangerous risks
- Talking about wanting to die
- Neglect of personal appearance
- Substance abuse
- Physical harm
- Sudden sense of calm
- Researching ways to die, and making a plan
- Seeking out lethal means
- Saying goodbye

NBPA

© 2023

Helping someone who is suicidal

Suicide Hotlines: 9-8-8 / 9-1-1

If someone feels suicidal, talking to someone who can listen and be supportive may be their first step towards getting the help they need. They may have talked about wanting to end their life, or you may be concerned that they are thinking about it.

Worrying about someone who is suicidal can be a stressful and hard task, which is important to be prepared. You might feel unsure of what to do, but there are lots of things that might help. You could:

- *encourage* them to talk about their feelings
- *encourage* them to seek treatment and support
- *offer* emotional support
- *offer* practical support
- *help* them think of ideas for self-help
- *help* them to make a support plan

NBPA

© 2023

Helping someone who is suicidal

Suicide Hotlines: 9-8-8 / 9-1-1

If you feel like you're able to listen, it could help if you:

- **Ask open questions.** These are questions that invite someone to say more than 'yes' or 'no', such as:
 - *'How have you been feeling?'*
 - *'What happened next?'*
- **Give them time.** You might feel anxious to hear their answers, but it helps if you let them take the time they need to open up.
- **Take them seriously.** People who talk about suicide do sometimes act on their feelings – *it's a common myth that they don't*. It's better to assume that they are telling the truth and give them the help they need.
- **Try not to judge.** You might feel shocked, upset or frightened, but it's important not to blame the person for how they are feeling and offer guidance.
- **Don't skirt around the topic.** There is still a taboo around talking about suicide which can make it even harder for people experiencing these feelings to open up and feel understood. Direct questions about suicide like *'Are you having suicidal thoughts?'* or *'Have you felt like you want to end your life?'* can help someone talk about how they are feeling.

NBPA

© 2023

What is a support plan?

A support plan is a list that sets out how someone would like to be supported and what they can do to help themselves in a particular situation. It can encourage them to tell you what might help. It's also a useful way of keeping important information and contacts together in one place.

It's also important to think about in what capacity are you able to offer a person help. If someone wants help you don't feel you can offer, it's okay to find other options. You could encourage them to explore other ways of finding support.

It can be helpful to:

- *talk* together about what to include in the plan
- *ask* them what has or hasn't helped before
- *save* important numbers and resources on the plan
- *write* or *print* more than one copy of the plan
- *keep* the plan somewhere easy to find

NBPA

© 2023

How to create a support plan

This is for someone who feels suicidal to fill in, so the questions are written from their perspective.

What can I do to take care of myself?

This could include things like 'write down how I feel', 'watch my favorite movie' or 'do some exercise like walking'.

How would I like to be supported?

This could include a list of names and numbers of friends, family or professionals they can contact when they need support and details of how they would like to be supported, like 'ask me how I'm feeling' or 'come to appointments with me'.

Who can be contacted in an emergency?

It's best to agree on what to do in an emergency, with names and numbers for crisis services. This could include things like 'call 911 for an ambulance' or 'contact the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) on...'.

NBPA

© 2023

STANLEY - BROWN SAFETY PLAN

STEP 1: WARNING SIGNS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 2: INTERNAL COPING STRATEGIES – THINGS I CAN DO TO TAKE MY MIND OFF MY PROBLEMS WITHOUT CONTACTING ANOTHER PERSON:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 3: PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SETTINGS THAT PROVIDE DISTRACTION:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Name: _____ | Contact: _____ |
| 2. Name: _____ | Contact: _____ |
| 3. Place: _____ | 4. Place: _____ |

STEP 4: PEOPLE WHOM I CAN ASK FOR HELP DURING A CRISIS:

Your paragraph text

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Name: _____ | Contact: _____ |
| 2. Name: _____ | Contact: _____ |
| 3. Name: _____ | Contact: _____ |

STEP 5: PROFESSIONALS OR AGENCIES I CAN CONTACT DURING A CRISIS:

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Clinician/Agency Name: _____ | Phone: _____ |
| Emergency Contact : _____ | |
| 2. Clinician/Agency Name: _____ | Phone: _____ |
| Emergency Contact : _____ | |
| 3. Local Emergency Department: _____ | |
| Emergency Department Address: _____ | |
| Emergency Department Phone : _____ | |
| 4. Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) | |

STEP 6: MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT SAFER (PLAN FOR LETHAL MEANS SAFETY):

1. _____
2. _____

The Stanley-Brown Safety Plan is copyrighted by Barbara Stanley, PhD & Gregory K. Brown, PhD (2008, 2021). Individual use of the Stanley-Brown Safety Plan form is permitted. Written permission from the authors is required for any changes to this form or use of this form in the electronic medical record. Additional resources are available from www.suicidesafetyplan.com.

Stanley-Brown
Safety Planning Intervention

References:

Manuals:

How to support someone who is suicidal – Mind

Infosheets:

Recognizing the Signs: 16 Suicidal “Red Flags” –
Penn State Pro Wellness

Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain
– NIH

I’m So Stressed Out! – National Institute of Mental Health

Links:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression>

<https://www.bethe1to.com>

<https://therapistaid.com>

<https://beckinstitute.org>

NBPA

© 2023

The purpose is NOT to replace psychological/psychiatric therapy, but to provide a foundation for a layperson to give assist and direction for the appropriate resources. The NBPA is not a mental health or therapist organization; however, through advocacy and outreach mechanisms, this manual was created to share with you useful mental health information and techniques adapted from different models of therapy. All information is based on scientific evidence.

If you understand someone needs professional mental health services, it's important to identify licensed professionals in your area that can help.

If you identify that you're dealing with an emergency, you can contact one or more of the following:

- local emergency services 911
- National Suicide Crisis & Lifeline (9-8-8 or 1-800-273-8255)
- Crisis text line - to chat at 988lifeline.org, text HELLO" to 741741 (Crisis Text Line), or urge the person to visit the nearest emergency room.

