




BLACK BOYS, BLACK MEN, AND SUICIDE

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INTRODUCTION

- Doctor of Psychology (2020)
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist- 2018 (CA, TX, FL)
- Owner of Empire Counseling & Consultation
- Clinic Director of an outpatient substance abuse agency
- Specialties: Men's Issues, Anxiety, Depression, Relationship Conflicts, Minority Mental Health, Addiction
- Featured in media outlets such as: Cosmopolitan, O Magazine, BuzzFeed, Forbes



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learning undetected signs of suicide ideation among Black Boys and Men
- How to offer support to reduce SI outside of therapy
- How communities can help and reduce suicidal deaths among Black Boys and Men



FACTS ABOUT BLACK BOYS AND SUICIDE

- Self-reported suicide attempts for black adolescents rose by 73% between 1991 to 2017.
- Black boys increasingly likely to attempt suicide, then Black girls who have more ideation than attempts.
- Black boys are engaging in more lethal means when attempting suicide than Black girls which has increased by 122% between 1997-2017.
- Black boys are twice as likely to die by suicide than White youth.

FACTS ABOUT BLACK MEN AND SUICIDE

- In 2014, 80% of suicide deaths in the Black community were men.
- Recent research has observed that Caribbean black men in the US have the highest attempt rate for the African American community.
- Firearms were the predominant method of suicide among African Americans regardless of sex or age, suicides. Suffocation was the second most prevalent method.
- Black Men don't often recognize depression or trauma as an issue therefore don't associate SI as a problem.



TYPICAL SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Talking about suicide — for example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," "I wish I were dead" or "I wish I hadn't been born"
- Getting the means to take your own life, such as buying a gun or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone
- Having mood swings, such as being emotionally high one day and deeply discouraged the next
- Being preoccupied with death, dying or violence
- Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns
- Doing risky or self-destructive things, such as using drugs or driving recklessly
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there's no other logical explanation for doing this
- Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again
- Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated, particularly when experiencing some of the warning signs listed above

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR IN BLACK BOYS

- Withdrawn more than usual
- Mood changes (angrier, unable to express emotions, rather avoid school, sleeping more often, not interested in usual activities).
- Change in music (watch for the lyrics)
- Having difficulty in school
- Not interested



SIGNS TO WATCH FOR IN BLACK MEN

- Don't focus necessarily on typical routine such as work, social networks, and hobbies. Most Black Men are high functioning and will continue to do their normal activities but suffering in silence.
- Increasing substance use from social to at home and isolating when doing so.
- Irritable over the smaller things, wanting to talk less at home or isolate from friends especially on weekends.
- Discussing death and quality of life concerns
- Putting self in risky situations such as starting arguments that can lead to confrontation, activities that can lead to police involvement
- Inability to adapt to change
- Severe PTSD symptoms



MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

- Black Men/Boys suffer from high rates of:
 - PTSD
 - DEPRESSION
 - ANXIETY
- Risk Factors
 - Racism
 - Police Brutality
 - Childhood Trauma
 - Survivor's Guilt
 - Lack of understanding of healthy vs unhealthy coping skills/behaviors

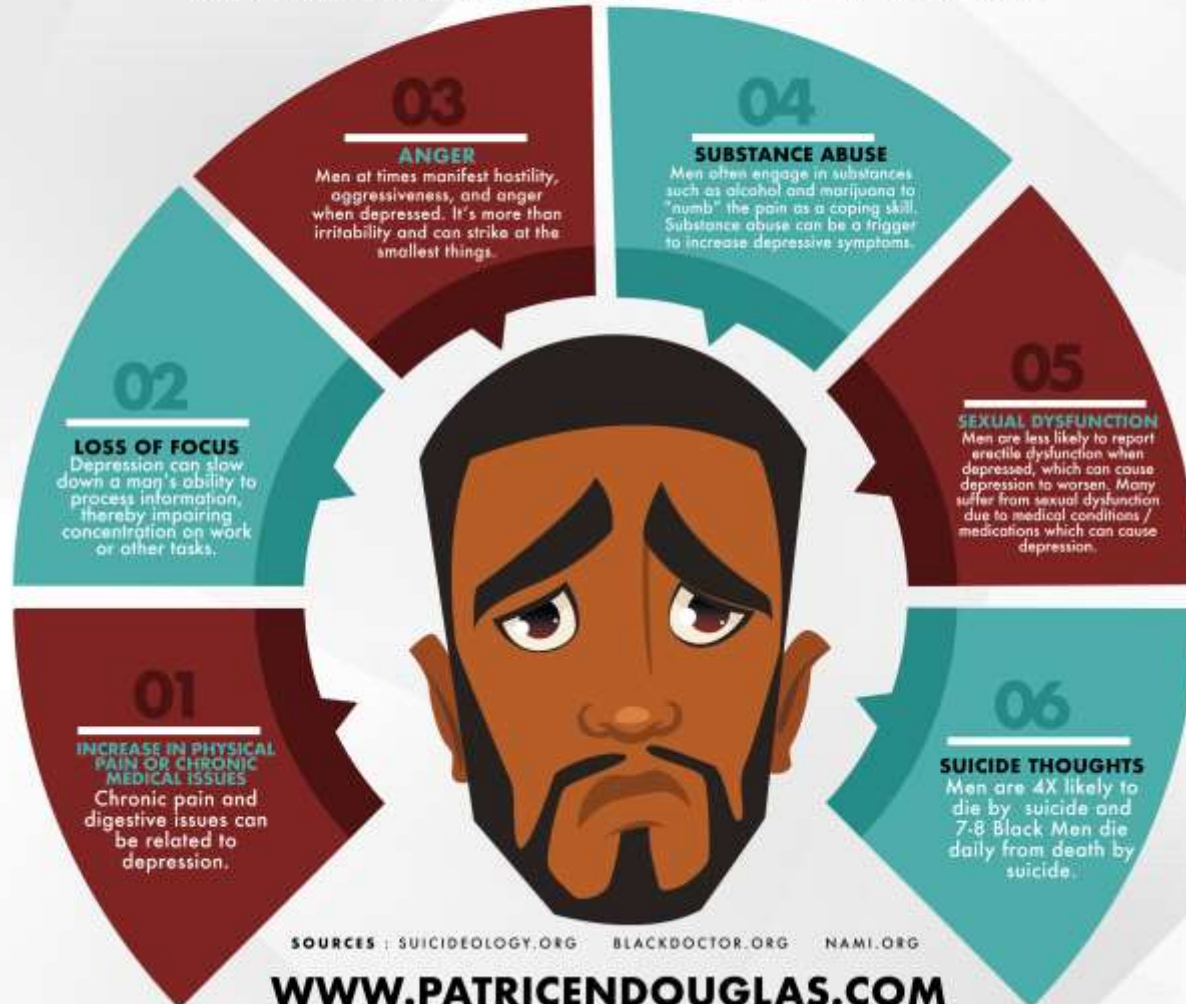
FACTS ABOUT **BLACK MEN & SUICIDE**





6 SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN BLACK MEN

AT LEAST 7% OF BLACK MEN WILL EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION IN THEIR LIFETIME



SOURCES : SUICIDEOLOGY.ORG BLACKDOCTOR.ORG NAMI.ORG

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS SLOW SUICIDE

- Boys are likely to attempt to use substances such as marijuana, alcohol, or opioids as a way to decompress.
- Men who are severely depressed are likely to overconsume alcohol, marijuana and may mix multiple substances which can be lethal.
- Men are likely to use excessive substances and mix as a way to end their life without using a more violent measure.
- Using substances is not as frowned upon in the Black community therefore it is an unnoticed symptom of a MH or SI issue.

WHY DON'T THEY ASK FOR HELP?

- Lack of understanding about suicide ideation and the causes of it
 - Many Black men don't recognize hopelessness as a gateway to ideation if not addressed.
- Shame and Guilt due to the expectations of being a Black male
- Intergenerational trauma- We all had issues and made it therefore you will too. "We don't have time to be weak, suck it up".
- Suicide is often discussed as an after-thought, not a prevention among the Black Community
- Stigma surrounding mental health and religion perspective

HOW CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

1

Check your biases and assumptions at the door:

- Studies show that non-Black professionals tend to minimize symptoms presented by Black men and don't provide adequate support.

2

Educate each other about the Black community's struggle with systematic racism, workplace racial tension, medical mistrust

3

Consult with Black professionals about symptoms, trauma, and racial issues to provide more stronger interventions among Black men and boys

HOW TO SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATE WITH BLACK BOYS AND MEN?

1

Be present and allow them to lead with the conversation. Use active listening skills by repeating what you hear and ask if you can ask questions about what they have said.

2

Be care to not label them or introduce mental health issues until you have built rapport and are sure about a diagnosis. Educate them on their symptoms and how that ties into mental health.

3

Do not ask them to educate you on their culture but instead be open to understanding and learning on your own to understand them more.

HOW TO SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATE WITH BLACK BOYS AND MEN?

1

Create a safe space for them to discuss their issues.

2

Listen without always having a solution if the person discusses their issues.

3

Understanding the difference between hopelessness and suicide ideation.

4

Ask the person directly if they are thinking of harming themselves with a non-judgmental disposition.



DO'S AND DON'TS

WHEN TALKING TO YOUR ADOLESCENT ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

DO'S

- ✓ I AM ALWAYS HERE IF YOU NEED TO TALK.
- ✓ YOU AREN'T IN THIS ALONE.
- ✓ CAN I TELL YOU ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE ABOUT A SIMILAR SITUATION.
- ✓ I CAN JUST LISTEN, I WON'T SAY ANYTHING.
- ✓ I LOVE YOU AND HERE TO HELP IF YOU WANT ME TO.
- ✓ I'VE NOTICED SOMETHING'S BEEN DIFFERENT WITH YOU; IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

DON'TS

- ✗ WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO BE DEPRESSED/ANXIOUS ABOUT?
- ✗ MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL IS EASY; WAIT UNTIL YOU BECOME AN ADULT
- ✗ GOD WON'T PUT MORE ON YOU THAN YOU CAN HANDLE
- ✗ I CAN GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO BE DEPRESSED/SAD ABOUT.

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RESOURCES

- American Association of Suicidology:
www.suicidology.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness:
www.nami.org
- Therapy For Black Girls:
www.therapyforblackgirls.com
- PsychologyToday: www.psychologytoday.com
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:
www.afsp.org
- Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome by Dr. DeGruy
- Ring the Alarm: The Crisis of Black Youth Suicide in America



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