

WEBINAR

 spring health

# Black mental health matters

## SPEAKERS



Kat Hall, LCSW  
Emotional Wellness Manager  
Harlem Children's Zone

Meet today's expert

# Kat Hall, LCSW

Emotional Wellness Manager

Harlem Children's Zone

- ✓ Non-Profit Manager with years of both clinical and program development experience focused on improving mental health outcomes for the community at large.
- ✓ Areas of focus include building organization wide initiatives to improve staff resilience and prevent burnout, improving public understanding of Mental Health and its impact, and creating healing spaces for racial trauma and the effects of various types of oppression.



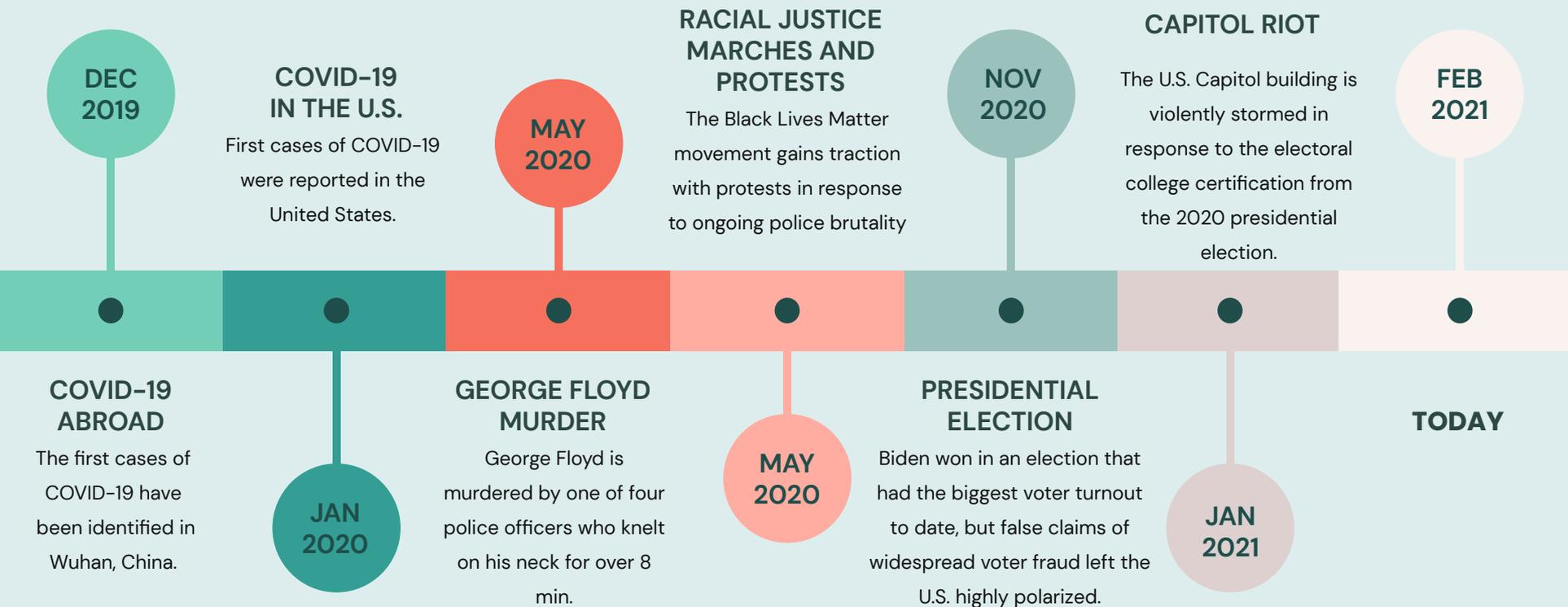
## Today we'll explore

- ✓ Gaining an understanding and awareness of unique challenges to Black mental health since beginning of COVID
- ✓ Developing an understanding of contextual factors surrounding mental health care in the Black community
- ✓ Building an awareness of the signs of stress
- ✓ Developing some first steps in creating a more supportive atmosphere for Black staff members



## LET'S REFLECT

# Timeline of our Shared Experiences



2020 IN REVIEW

# Universal stressors



Fear of contracting  
COVID



Isolation



Sadness



Worry about  
the news



Difficulty  
with focus



Managing  
remote work



Managing  
remote work  
WITH KIDS!



Significant  
routine  
changes



Challenges  
with sleep



Challenges  
with eating



Changes in  
activity level



Difficulty  
accessing usual  
pleasant  
activities



Changes in access  
to in person  
faith-based  
practices



Uncertainty

# Why Black mental health matters

- ✓ **One in three** Black Americans in need of mental health support actually receives it.
- ✓ When Black Americans receive mental health care, it is less likely to be guideline consistent/evidence-based.
- ✓ Black Americans are less likely to be included in research studies
- ✓ Stigma - one study showed up to 63% of Black Americans see mental health as a sign of personal weakness.
- ✓ When Black Americans do seek out services, they have significant difficulty finding culturally supportive options.





## 2020 IN REVIEW

# Increased 2020 impact for Black Community

- ✓ The Black community has been disproportionately affected by COVID in infection rate, hospitalizations, and death (*Oppel et al 2020*).
- ✓ Black families are highly represented in the essential worker category and lack choice of how to respond to fear of contamination (*Kinder & Ford, 2020*).
- ✓ Racism in the media and on social media (*Fowers & Wan, 2020*).
- ✓ Pressure at work to “show up” and “be responsive” during George Floyd protests (*Jan, 2020*).
- ✓ Fear of being targets of retaliatory violence and police brutality (*Fowers & Wan, 2020*).

# Stress continuum



## Stress

Stress is something that happens in a person's environment that is overwhelming and that the person believes will stretch their ability to cope in a healthy way (Dulmus & Hilarski, 2003).



## Crisis

Crisis causes an imbalance in an individual/system. A "hazardous event" disrupts the person/system's ability to stay balanced. This makes it difficult for them to cope in healthy ways and makes the person/system particularly vulnerable (Roberts, 1996).



## Trauma

Schauer, Neuner, & Elbert (2011) define trauma as a scary situation that threatens a person's safety to the point that they are extremely afraid and their body and mind enter survival mode.



## Chronic Stress/ Allostatic Load

Allostasis is the brain and body's process for stabilizing itself in the face of stress and change (McEwen & Wingfield, 2003). While allostasis helps people survive, if it is used too much can cause significant health issues such as heart disease or death.

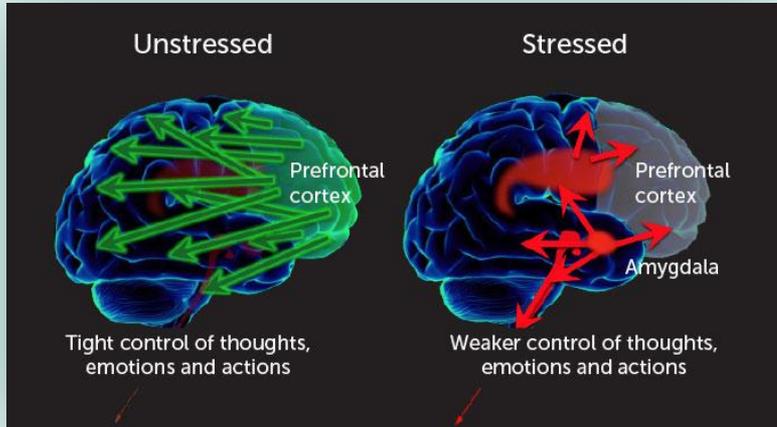


## Racial Trauma

Trauma as a result of a specific event (direct or indirect) of racial discrimination. The mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes (Helms, J. E., Nicolas, G., & Green, C. E. (2010).

# Signs and symptoms of stress

Stress is unique and each person may respond differently. The key is to notice if behavior has shifted significantly from baseline.



## THINGS YOU MAY NOTICE

- ✓ Hyperarousal
- ✓ Withdrawal
- ✓ Difficulty with focus and staying engaged
- ✓ Irritability/Anger
- ✓ Increase in sick days
- ✓ Mood instability
- ✓ Poor work/life balance
- ✓ Distracted
- ✓ Judgment errors/tasks taking longer

# Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach to Mitigate Consequences of Racial Stress and Trauma

Organizations can help improve resilience and create nurturing, predictable environments that counteract the consequences of racial trauma and stress; at HCZ we do this by adopting trauma-informed, healing centered practices.



## Empathy

**Radical empathy:**  
Actively striving for awareness, to understand the feelings and experiences of others.



## Collective Perspective

Healing is a process for everyone, and healing happens in the context of a supportive relationship.



## Distress Tolerance

**Distress Tolerance:**  
the ability to manage actual or perceived distress. Modeling and allowing processing space.



## Resilience

**Resilience Promotion:**  
Connection, MH Hygiene, Feelings of Mastery, Creation of control, low barrier access to services.



## Empathy

### Radical empathy:

Actively striving for awareness, to understand the feelings and experiences of others.



## Collective Perspective

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## STRATEGIES

# Empathy + Collective Perspective

- We often act before thinking, by building mindfulness and self awareness we can respond to momentary needs in a way that is fully and more supportive.
  - **Reflective exercise** – Take 2 minutes to think about when you felt overwhelmed at work from outside stressors, what did someone at work do that felt supportive? Can that be replicated and is there space to make that action more normal and ubiquitous for all?
- Practice engaging empathy – receiving empathy from others reduces mental health symptomatology.
- Notice your own mental health and seek support, it paradoxically can help others when you are well yourself.
- Normalize and model positive ways of interacting with stress, create processes that enable periods of rest when needed
- **Educate yourself**
  - Attend a training – Like today!
  - Seek out opportunities to read/ learn more about Black mental health from culturally appropriate sources (caveat – note your Black colleagues may not want to speak directly about this with non-Black staff members)
- Setup system for continuously reviewing whether your org's or team's policies and procedures support mindful and culturally sensitive responses that are mindful of mental health
- Watch and Listen! Notice significant changes in behavior



## Resilience

### Resilience Promotion:

Connection, MH Hygiene, Feelings of Mastery, Creation of control, low barrier access to services.



## Distress Tolerance

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## STRATEGIES

# Resilience promotion + distress tolerance

- Name it – Don't avoid news about systemic issues. While you may not be able to process in the workplace, try to avoid downplaying or ignoring national news of injustice.
- Consider allowing opportunities for people to connect around these topics, engage consultants if necessary to run groups (sometimes EAPs are willing to do this) or for individual sessions.
- Acknowledge safe spaces may not truly be safe, many people will want to keep their feelings and thoughts out of work.
- Slow down – Sometimes this is impossible, but when it is allow a bit of extra flexibility in scheduling should people need time to do what they need for themselves.
- Create and share lists of MH resources across the company that are culturally supportive (eg, make sure there are providers that represent all different demographics)
- **Offer free or low cost options**
  - EAP programs and employee sponsored MH benefits
  - Community based resources
- **Include non- traditional options**
  - Meditation
  - Creative arts, music therapy, dance therapy, drama therapy
  - Massage
  - Exercise
  - Healthy eating



## Don't single anyone out!



Adding supportive options for mental health support should be made available and encouraged for everyone! This reduces stigma, and raises the mental health of the entire workplace which is good for all staff and leaders.

# Questions?

PS– If you need to leave early, don't forget to complete our exit survey for a chance to win our raffle.

# Thank you!

## Let's stay in touch.

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