



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Toolkit

SELF-CARE AND WELLBEING FOR ETHNICALLY DIVERSE WOMEN

A practical guide
for employees



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	03
BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY	04
SELF CARE THEMES AND TIPS	06
APPENDIX	11
END NOTES	12

FOREWORD

To all ethnically diverse women, this toolkit is for you.

The past 18-months has been tough, and no one has a crystal ball, but we know that the future has unforeseen challenges as we all seek to navigate our way out of the current crisis. As we produced our factsheet giving insight to ethnically diverse women and the pandemic in May 2020, we found that Common Mental Health Disorders (CMHD) are higher for ethnically diverse women, and this has been reported since 2014.¹ 29% of Black women and 28.7% of women with a Mixed or other ethnicity reported experiencing a CMHD, the highest overall rates across all ethnic groups.²

This toolkit is not designed to replace professional counselling or therapy if you need it. It is also not a scorecard of exercises of which each and every one has to be completed.

Business in the Community (BITC) commissioned two professional counsellors with more than 28 years of counselling expertise between them to create this toolkit and a guide for managers. Through this toolkit, we are providing credible insights from counsellors with expertise on race, gender and mental health. We are sharing tools and ideas that can equip you with practical tips to help you to navigate the turbulent challenges that often happen under the surface of ‘game faces’ and ‘efficient masks’ as we step up to responsibilities at home, work and in our wider communities and extended families.

Throughout the pandemic, there have also been disproportionate cases of contagion and death within ethnically diverse communities. This has resulted in disproportionate volumes of grief and stress which can be connected to what is happening to families here and abroad.

I want to encourage every ethnically diverse woman to create a Care circle: a circle with ethnically diverse women who have shared experiences, where you can share these tools, be yourself, share what is on your mind and receive support or just provide a listening ear to others. I want to leave you with two ancient proverbs, in an abundance of counsellors there is safety and if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far go together.

When reading this toolkit, I personally advise you to tap into sources of contentment and joy, whether it is your faith, an art project or a walk in nature, to help keep your optimism. Surround yourself with a support network that you love and trust. Some of you may feel inspired to create a space with others to share some of the tools within this kit.

When thinking about the ‘I am ...’ cards (see *page 8*), decide your affirmations and do your research. Speak to those who have known you over many years. Include parents, family and friends if you can, to gain some insights about yourself and some of the positive traits that they have seen you display even in your early years. Believe the nice and sometimes surprising things that many of them will tell you – and add them to your collection of affirmations. We have added some more of our own tips in the appendix actions that you can take away from this toolkit.

You are valuable, and you matter. Take time to take care of yourself.

Sandra Kerr CBE
Race Equality Director
Business in the Community

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

This toolkit has been funded by the Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation. It has been developed in partnership with race and mental health experts. The professional counsellors who have collaborated with us to produce these materials have drawn on their 32 years of experience working in the financial services; 28 years in the Secondary, Further, Higher and Adult Education sectors. 10 years in NHS Primary Care Trusts; 5 years in Community Counselling Services; 13 years in Bereavement Counselling Services; 10 Years in Employee Assistance Programmes and 28 years of counselling experience, more than 4000 counselling hours and more than 1000 annual hours of delivering anti-racism and inclusion training to students and well as counselling trainees. This self-care toolkit aims to support ethnically diverse women with recognising, naming and developing ways to cope with the unique mental health challenges they face at work.

The themes in this toolkit have been piloted with more than 300 individuals who felt that it resonated with their experiences and would be beneficial for their wellbeing. The Race at Work 2018 Scorecard Report found that employees said that their employers were not comfortable talking about race (38%), religion (35%) or social background (33%). In the pilot, when asked if tapping into their faith (if they have one) helps, 84% responded yes and the remaining 16% of people responded with “don’t know”. These are important dimensions that need to be explored to transform the way we think about mental health.

More than 1 in 3 (38%) of ethnically diverse women have experienced or witnessed racial harassment and bullying from customers and clients. The rate is highest for Bangladeshi women at 65%

Race at Work YouGov survey, 2018

This toolkit has also been co-created with 25 ethnically diverse women during the BITC virtual ‘Wellbeing for Ethnic Minority Women’ co-creation session in April 2021. Attendees had the opportunity to comment and add their contributions to each section.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing disparities. Those from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to have faced financial insecurity, bereavement, job losses, discrimination and precarious employment, which are all risk factors for serious mental health conditions.^{3,4,5} Ethnically diverse individuals are also less likely to have access to services and practices that are beneficial for mental health, such as NHS mental health care⁶ and green space.⁷

This toolkit does not have all the answers. Despite evidence of disparities in mental health across ethnicities, we are limited by a lack of data. However, we are determined not to let a lack of evidence get in the way of responding to real world needs. It is crucial that Black, Asian and ethnic minority women see their experiences reflected in mental health literature and to have access to strategies that will help them cope with the unique challenges they face in the workplace. The insights in this guide are based on the anecdotal lived experiences collected over years of counselling practice and training: whether it’s overt racial bullying from managers, being mistaken for the other ethnically diverse women in their team, or not receiving credit for their work. This guide draws from collective experiences to remind Black, Asian and ethnic minority women that they are not alone, so that they can pause, reflect and be reminded of their value.

In addition to supporting individuals with self-care, BITC’s race campaign has been tackling the systemic root causes of racial disparities at work for more than 25 years. This toolkit supplements our guidance for managers titled Mental Health and Wellbeing for Ethnically Diverse Women: A Practical Guide for Managers.



SELF-CARE THEMES & TIPS

1

Tiredness and fatigue caused by the accumulation of suffering multiple microaggressions

2

Managing stress caused by questioning, undermining, interrupting and being talked over

3

Relief of frustration and pain from being treated as invisible

4

Treatment for worry, anxiety, or fear due to feeling intimidated by not knowing how to approach or address a specific issue

5

Fights persistent bouts of doubt, caused by not being heard and acts of silencing

6

Detox from labels and stereotypes

7

Work through depression, feelings of isolation and loss of motivation

8


How to stop the spread of the effects, from being openly attacked and disrespected



SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES	SELF-CARE TIP	HOW?
<p>1. Tiredness and fatigue caused by the accumulation of suffering multiple micro aggressions</p>	<p>I just need a moment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice intentional distancing by taking a break, a walk or taking a day off. See the appendix for advice on taking time off. Gather and centre yourself in the moment. Find a quiet place. Sit squarely, with your feet flat on the ground. Become aware of your body. Focus on your breathing and slowly inhale for the count of 10 seconds. Then slowly and with control exhale for 10 seconds. Repeat for the total time of 2 minutes.
<p>2. Managing stress caused by questioning, undermining, interrupting and being talked over</p>	<p>Know which battles to fight</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pause, assess, evaluate – ask yourself, does this require your attention, engagement or response? If yes, a calm and immediate response demonstrates self-control and disarms the micro-aggression. For ‘micro-intervention’ strategies for confronting racial micro-aggressions, see BITC’s “Everyday Inclusion: What Really Works?” report. Consider also seeking support from an ally. If no, take a note by documenting and journaling to help re-centre yourself. Keep a record of the incident that has negatively impacted your mood so you can examine and articulate your experiences and the challenges you are facing.
<p>3. Relief of frustration and pain from being treated as invisible</p>	<p>Show up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give yourself permission to accept, embrace and celebrate your voice as a contribution that matters. How? Fearlessly Show Up, Be Present and Be Authentic in spaces that appear not to be meant for you. Practice being yourself by owning your words, ideas and thoughts. Set a goal to contribute one thing to your next team meeting. Then seek to build on that at each meeting going forward. Practice calm confrontations.

Set a goal to contribute one thing to your next team meeting – then seek to build on that at each meeting going forward

SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES	SELF-CARE TIP	HOW?
4. Treatment for worry, anxiety, or fear due to feeling intimidated by not knowing how to approach or address a specific issue	Protect your peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in intentional laughter – it brings the body and mind back into balance. Listen to/watch something light hearted. Connecting to cultural traditions and behaviours provides a sense of security and safety. Draw on past experiences that you have overcome. List your successes. Reconnect to your power source – this can take a variety of forms including faith, nature, art, meditation and exercise. Tap into your creativity – express yourself through journaling, poetry, music, dance etc.
5. Fights persistent bouts of doubt, caused by not being heard and acts of silencing	I am...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affirm yourself. Use index cards (or strips of paper). On each card, write one statement that begins with 'I am'. Once you have completed all 31 cards, shuffle them and each morning, pull out one statement and speak it out aloud to yourself throughout the day. Keep the statement somewhere that you can easily access it.
6. Detox from labels and stereotypes	Know who you are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define, own and speak your truth – you would not answer to a name that is not yours, or a variation to which you have not approved. Therefore, you do not answer to unsolicited labels and stereotypes. You teach people how to treat you by what you approve, allow, command, demand and communicate by your presence.

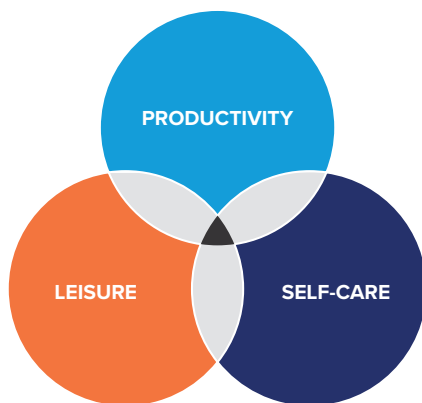
SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES	SELF-CARE TIP	HOW?
<p>7. Work through depression, feelings of isolation and loss of motivation</p> 	<p>Support network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in talking therapy – explore the Counselling Directory website: www.counselling-directory.org.uk, where you will be able to refine your search by location and more. Most profiles will include a photo of the counsellor/therapist. It is important to take your time and choose the right person for you. Counselling begins with an assessment session, which provides an opportunity for you to consider whether you will be able to work well together. Speak to your General Practitioner (GP) – your GP can make a referral to short term therapy and/or counselling. Waiting list times vary but can be in the region of up to 6 months and beyond. The GP may discuss medication with you. You must remember that the decision to take medication is always yours. Confide in family and friends – our 'tribe' can often be one of our most valuable assets. It is easy in moments of feeling overwhelmed, to withdraw. This usually comes from a place of not wanting to be or feel like we are a burden on others. But remember that you can never be a burden to those who love you. Sharing is caring. You are not alone.
<p>8. How to stop the spread of the effects, from being openly attacked and disrespected</p>	<p>Knowledge is power</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be informed about the policies and procedures within your organisation. Many workplaces also offer mental health support.



APPENDIX

Taking time off

Your time off is a chance to take care of yourself and exercise self-compassion. Oftentimes, your mind and body will be naturally drawn to what will be most beneficial to you. Perhaps it's an invigorating walk, a chat with a loved one or doing nothing at all.



It's important to take a balanced approach. Splitting your time between productivity, leisure and self-care will work wonders for your mental and physical health. Be mindful of what you have recently spent the most time doing. If you have been working hard, use your day off for leisure and self-care. Leisure can be done alone or with others and includes activities like watching a movie, engaging in your hobbies or scheduling time with family or friends. Self-care activities reinvigorate you and give you the space to look after yourself. Perhaps you can light some candles or journal about something that has been on your mind.

Identifying your values

Values are core beliefs about what is important to us. They guide our decisions, behaviours and lifestyles. Knowing our values allows us to live authentically and with purpose. We are often at our happiest when we know and live by our values and we can feel uncomfortable and anxious when we are not able to act according to our core beliefs, or when we feel they have been infringed upon.

How can we identify our values?

- **Reflect upon the good times**

Identify times when you were happiest in your personal and professional life. What were you doing? What contributed to your happiness? Repeat the process for both your proudest and most fulfilled moments. Use your answers to determine your core values.

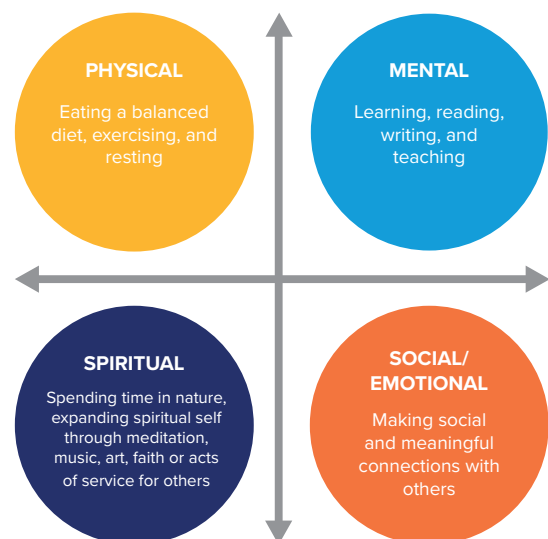
Look for opportunities to live by them and add them to your routine. If you value community, perhaps you could look for ways to volunteer or take part in community events. If you are a nature-lover, why not go for daily walks in your local green space or take up birdwatching?

- **Talk to people you trust**

It can be helpful to ask a trusted person to lend an ear and support you with identifying what is important to you. Ask them what they see as your strengths and what they have learnt from you. If you are facing a difficult decision, talk to someone who will listen and ask you questions that will offer you clarity.

- **Focus on continuous growth in all areas of your life**

Seek a balanced programme for self-renewal and improvement in the four areas of your life: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual.⁸ Look for ways to embed your values into each area and set goals to work towards.



END NOTES

More about the authors:

Tamikah Andrew-Thomas is an Integrative Counsellor and Psychotherapist; trained in the three main approaches of Counselling and Psychotherapy (Humanistic, Cognitive Behavioural and Psychodynamic). She is a registered member of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP). Tamikah is the Head of Programme for Psychology and Counselling in a popular Adult Education college in central London and delivers workshops and facilitates training programmes on anti-racism.

Tamikah's Qualifications include MA Counselling & Psychotherapy, HND Integrative Counselling & Psychotherapy, Certificate Counsellor Supervision, Post Graduate Certificate In Education (PGCE) and CMI Diploma in Management and Leadership.

Tamikah is a member of BCAP and the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS).

Delrose Bowes is an Integrative counselling professional and registered member BACP. She runs her own private practice as well as offering contracted services to various organisations. Delrose is the coordinator for an award-winning Psychology and Counselling department at a college in central London. As a teacher, trainer and mentor she delivers courses and programmes in the education sector and private sector, some of the courses include Counselling as a Career, Setting up a Counselling Practice and Raising Self Esteem. She also delivers the training on bereavement and loss for a bereavement charity in Croydon, a charity supporting communities in the borough for more than 25 years. All these courses are embedded with race awareness, cultural sensitivity and mental wellbeing.

Delrose has an Advanced Diploma in Humanistic Integrative Counselling and is a BACP member.

Footnotes:

1. Ethnic minority women mental health and the impact of COVID-19, 2020
2. Ethnicity Facts and Figures: Common Mental Health Disorders, 2017
3. Carnegie UK Trust: Race Inequality in the Workforce (2020)
4. Mental Health Foundation: The COVID-19 pandemic, financial inequality and mental health (2020)
5. BMJ: Mitigating ethnic disparities in covid-19 and beyond (2021)
6. Synergi Collaborative Centre: Ethnic Inequalities in UK Mental Health Systems, 2017
7. Runnymede Trust: The race factor in access to green space, 2020
8. Franklin Covey, Sharpen the Saw



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7RQ

www.bitc.org.uk
020 7566 8650

Business in the Community is a registered charity in England and Wales (297716) and Scotland (SC046226). Company limited by guarantee No. 1619253.

Report designed and produced by itslikethis.co