

Mental Well-Being Among Men of Color

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Community-driven, culturally sensitive solutions empower men whose experiences are frequently ignored and whose voices are often silenced.

Centering the lived experiences of marginalized, excluded individuals can generate an abundance of strategies to promote mental well-being among men of color.

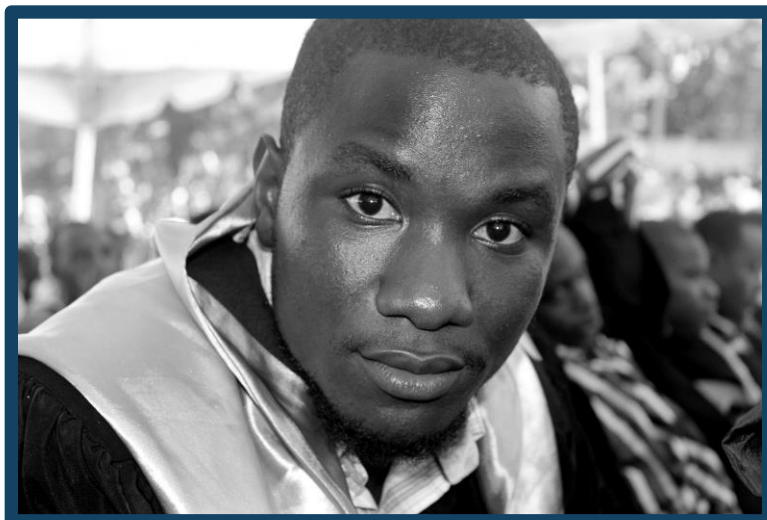


Figure 1 Photograph by siryart903. Used under CCo

A Boston-based coalition of community organizations was tasked with developing an action plan to promote mental well-being among men of color. The coalition engaged in action research to identify the individual, organizational, and community-level

factors that contribute to mental well-being. The coalition collected 174 surveys and facilitated focus groups with 55 men. The

“Centering lived experience resulted in community-driven, culturally sensitive solutions to promote mental wellbeing among men of color.”

planning process created valuable opportunities for relationship building and partnership development. Proactive community engagement, continuous capacity building, inclusive data

Highlights

We can use lived experience to generate strategies to enhance mental health and well-being.

Data collected through Participatory Action Research, by and for the community, can yield relevant and helpful findings.

Empowering Data Collection

The uniquely designed survey and focus group empowered individuals on both sides of the data collection process. The participatory crafting of the survey created a meaningful opportunity for respondents to reflect on their assets. The inclusion of film in the focus group created a space of safety and belonging. The enthusiastic response to the survey and focus groups reinforced the need for men of color to design strategies to address mental well-being. The men from the neighborhood sites challenged the coalition to develop a more comprehensive definition of mental well-being. This holistic understanding resulted in innovative data collection methods where men were eager to explore a deeply stigmatized topic.

Results

The **importance of identifying existing resources to incorporate into the action plan** cannot be overstated. The coalition was adamant about creating a sustainable action plan with attainable goals, a strategy that also increased the visibility of existing work. The neighborhood sites became more aware of the variety of available resources while completing the action plan and can now better engage men with diverse needs.

During several coalition meetings, the neighborhood sites were invited to share their own interpretations of the data. Though most of these conversations formed the substance of the action plan, the coalition also had more informal, less task-oriented conversations about the data. As organizations focused on housing and financial opportunity, these conversations illuminated the clear intersections between their work and mental well-being. They also solidified the need for a cross-sector approach to address these issues.

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<https://www.gjcpp.org/en/article.php?issue=33&article=200>

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Our research aligns with the Community Psychology foundational principles of empowerment, sociocultural and cross-cultural competence. Through our work, we promoted community inclusion and partnership, resource development, and community education.