

The Importance of Heritage and Mental Health in Native and Indigenous Communities

Many people within these communities embrace a shared group identity that is formed by one's relationship to the community and also to the land and one's ancestors. The Native American and Indigenous communities are familiar with how these shared experiences of genocide, colonization, and alienation can impact mental health if not properly addressed.



Words Matter

Both communities share deep traumas that have been passed along for generations. However, the words "depressed" and "anxious" are absent from some native languages. Instead, alternative expressions and terms such as "ghost sickness" or "heartbreak syndrome" are often used.

There is a lack of willingness to access care within the community because many Indigenous people feel stereotyped, ignored, and disrespected by non-Indigenous providers. Therefore, Indigenous persons with anxiety and depression may seek help from other sources including traditional and spiritual healers instead of conventional mental health counseling.



Interconnectedness

Mental health is directly related to interconnectedness. Many tribal cultures embrace the notions of interconnectedness balancing the mind, body, and spirit. This highlights how one's well-being is entwined with cultural identity, family, and a connection to the past.



Federally recognized tribes are provided health and educational assistance through a government agency called Indian Health Service. However, the community still has less accessibility to hospitals, health clinics or contract health services provided by the IHS and other tribal health programs because of the rural and often isolated locations of the communities.



Resources

Check out these helpful resources to learn more about the [Native and Indigenous community](#) and additional support for [anxiety and depression](#). For more information visit www.adaa.org.

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