

Empowering the Mental Health of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour

A Workbook to Deal with the Impacts of Racism



This workbook was collaboratively created with BIPOC Healing and Wellness Centre's Reena Samra (left), Soni Dasmohapatra (right) and Creatives Empowered, with the generous support of **Warner Bros. Discovery Access Canada** and the **Canada Media Fund**. For more information on the workshop that accompanied this workbook, please visit **Empowering IBPOC Mental Health**.



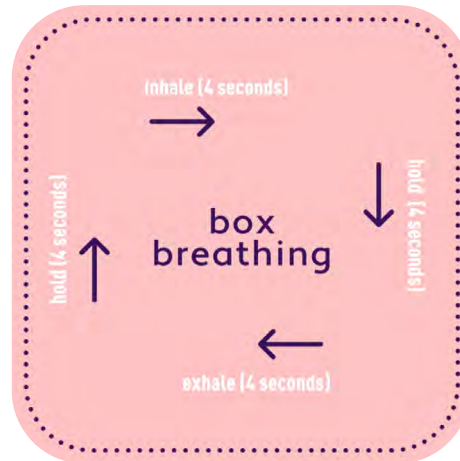
BIPOC Healing and Wellness Centre is a specialized service tailored to provide anti-racist, decolonizing, intersectional feminist and culturally-informed therapy to individuals, couples, families & groups who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) in Alberta. Our centre was born on the idea that racialized folks need and deserve access to healing and wellness supports that are representative of our unique lived experiences, cultures, societal barriers, systemic oppression and marginalization. We specialize in therapy for BIPOC mental health, grief, intergenerational and racial trauma, and healing from racism and discrimination. We also support with racial identity issues and identity-based trauma, as well as newcomer, immigrant and refugee mental health. We offer safer spaces for BIPOC folks to receive mental health support, express ourselves freely without fear of judgement or prejudice, to speak our truths, and share our racial and/or cultural experiences. Racialized folks deserve to find support and solidarity with others who may share similar experiences. We work from an inclusive, holistic and accessible lens that integrates race, culture and/or spirituality into the therapy room. We are for BIPOC, by BIPOC. Our supports reflect the diversity of our community and come from a foundation of cultural humility.



Creatives Empowered is a non-profit collective of artists + creatives. We are Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, empowering each other as an allied community. We are film + tv, media and arts professionals – from emerging to established – based in western Canada. We are the first and only organization of its kind in Alberta. **Creatives Empowered is inspired by and embodies what is truly possible when IBPOC talent are empowered to thrive.** Our strong and growing IBPOC membership, and the community we serve, also represents various intersections of identity, including those who self-identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, People with Disabilities and women. Our **Ultimate Vision** is to explore and encourage new and diverse ways of creating works that are inherently non-colonial. To create a more equitable cultural sector, that accurately reflects the world we live in. And to eliminate systemic racism within arts + culture.

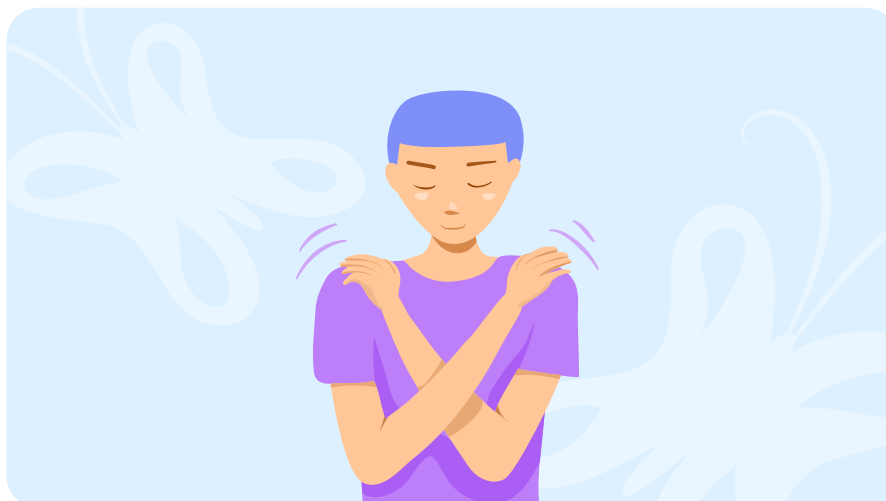
Trauma-informed somatic practices to deal with the impacts of racism – grounding techniques:

Box breathing is a type of paced breathing that provides you with a chance to slow down, manage your stress and provide yourself with a resource during times that are overwhelming. This is a simple technique that can be used anywhere and anytime. Inhale for a count of 4, pause for 4, exhale for 4, pause for 4. This can be done for 4 rounds before resuming regular breathing.



Butterfly Hug Technique:

The Butterfly Hug technique is a form of self-soothing and grounding that can be utilized when you are feeling distress. It uses bilateral stimulation, which means that it stimulates both sides of the body and also both sides of the brain, allowing for processing any emotions or incidents that are stuck in the nervous system. This technique involves crossing your arms across your chest so that each hand touches the opposite upper arm or shoulder. You can then move your hands like the wings of a butterfly, to tap your arms/shoulders in an alternating rhythm. After 30 seconds, you can then pause, take a big breath, and notice how you are feeling in your body. You can repeat this tapping multiple times until you feel more relaxed in your body.



Racial Microaggressions:

What are microaggressions?

Microaggressions are often subtle and indirect comments, slights, statements, actions or inactions towards folks who experience oppression and marginalization, that has an impact that is harmful, discriminatory and hostile. This is often targeted towards people based on their racial, cultural and/or intersectional identities. Microaggressions are normalized in our society and exist on a daily basis in everyday exchanges, that convey degrading messaging towards folks experiencing them. While microaggressions can be intentional, they are not always intentional or consciously perpetrated; oftentimes, they reside in the unconscious, internalized bias of the oppressor perpetuating them, especially when the oppressor is not actively working to deconstruct, unlearn and dismantle this.

Three main types of microaggressions:

Microassaults – deliberate slights, behaviors or discriminatory actions that are meant to hurt the targeted person through name calling, belittling, mockery, abusive language, or degrading someone's dignity and respect.

Microinvalidations – discrediting or minimizing the lived experiences of someone based on their underrepresented identity. This can make people feel like no one is listening to them, no one believes them, and it works to erase their experiences.

Microinsults – rude, insensitive comments that subtly disrespect a person's marginalized identity, make assumptions about them, and could work to exclude them, other them and make them believe they do not belong.

Examples of Microaggressions (this list is not exhaustive):

- Assumptions or stereotypes made about someone's racial, cultural or ethnic background
- Comments that are disguised under a veil of what appears to be a compliment or a joke, but is actually a hurtful hidden insult or back-handed degrading comment
- Being talked over, interrupted, or not allowed to take up space
- Double standards or unfair treatment; eg. A Black person is getting penalized in the workplace for little mistakes that their white colleagues are not receiving backlash over
- Not being given the same grace and compassion as others with more privileged identities
- Being denied opportunities
- Lack of support, safety and protection
- "Color blindness"
- Assumption of criminality
- Pathologizing cultural values or communication styles
- Tone policing
- Cultural appropriation
- Inaction or bystander effect – no one is helping you
- A look that makes you feel uncomfortable
- A vibe in the room that makes your stomach drop
- A condescending tone of voice that makes you feel uneasy
- Feeling like you have to walk on eggshells in a space

What can we do to start to heal from racial microaggressions?

The reality of microaggressions is that they are often ongoing and constant experiences that BIPOC are faced with as a regular part of our lives. It can be hard to fully heal these wounds when we keep re-experiencing the trauma. However, culture heals, and community heals. Racialized folks can experience the power and healing of intentional community. We can share about our experiences with racism and support each other through this. The more that racialized people talk about our experiences and connect with others who can relate, the more empowered and the less alone we can feel.

Ideas for Healing:

Let yourself feel your feelings – All of your emotions are allowed to be here as you are on your healing journey. It is okay to feel sadness, anger, rage, disappointment, fear, shame, guilt, shock, rejection, or any other feelings you may have. It can be helpful to find what works for you to hold space for these feelings and move through them in the ways that you need. Perhaps that could be through journaling, drawing, listening to music, dancing, exercising, or other outlets.

1. **Practice self compassion** – It can be really healing to learn how to go easier and gentler on yourself. You deserve to extend the same grace, care and kindness to yourself that you would give to a close friend or loved one. Practice noticing and challenging critical self talk and replacing it with more supportive affirmations. Some examples could be “I am doing the best I can right now” or “I can learn to accept myself as I am.” You can choose phrases that feel meaningful and authentic to you, which will be different for every person.
2. **Lean into hope** – Experiencing racism can cause feelings of hopelessness. It can be important in these moments to find anchors of hope to hold onto, even if it feels small. Hope shows us the possibilities that we can have for the future. It helps us to keep going even when we are hurting, and things feel challenging. It can help us to free ourselves from being defined by our current circumstances, and to feel empowered that we can grow, change and heal. Whether it is hearing stories of resiliency and strength within your family or community, reading inspiring news about people helping each other, or appreciating a warm summer day – find what instills hope in you.
3. **Turn to your support network** – You do not have to suffer alone, and you deserve support as you go through this. Talk to a friend, family member or colleague, go to your local cultural centre and connect with your community members, go to your place of worship or spirituality, find an online forum or support group for people of colour, or any other connections that feel safe to you. Community care can be helpful for validating and uplifting each other through this collective experience.
4. **Storytelling** – Our stories from our homelands, ancestors and lineages are so sacred. You deserve to have safe spaces in your life where you can give voice to your stories and name your experiences with racism. Find trusted spaces where you can share with people who can empathize and understand.

5. **Find an anti-racist, culturally informed therapist** – If you feel like you need to talk to a mental health professional about your racial grief and trauma, find someone who you feel comfortable with. You can look at their profiles online to determine if their values align with anti-racism and culturally safe practices. You can always email them any questions that you have or schedule a free phone consultation with them to ask them what kind of knowledge, experience, training or perspectives that they have in this area. You can choose a BIPOC-identified therapist if that feels safer for you. Know that you are allowed to decide who the right mental health support is for you because this is your healing journey.
6. **Limit social media or news consumption** – If it is causing you more distress to read continuous news stories or posts about racism, just know that it is totally okay to decide what you can and cannot consume. You are allowed to take breaks or spend less time “doom scrolling” and more time nourishing yourself.
7. **Set boundaries** – Figure out if there are any other limits that you might need to set with yourself or with others in order to support you during this time of healing, and what some small steps you might want to take to put it into action. Boundaries can be some of the most supportive ways we can find peace, empowerment, autonomy, choice and healthy control in our lives. It is okay to say no to what does not serve you, and often knowing what our “no’s” are can be healing for trauma.
8. **Utilize cultural and spiritual practices for healing** – Spend time connecting with your culture/spirituality/faith so that you can feel a sense of meaning and purpose during this time. So many of us have healing practices embedded in the traditional knowledge systems that we were raised in, that may be outside of Westernized ideas of what self-care is. Maybe eating your cultural foods or spending time in ceremony can be what you need right now.
9. **Connect with generational and ancestral wisdom** – Many of us BIPOC folks have family members or ancestors who have been through hardships such as slavery, colonization, or residential schools. While there is intergenerational trauma in our lineages, there also is great wisdom and survival in our ancestries as well. If it feels nourishing and comforting for you, you may want to find practices that support you connecting with your ancestors or Elders. Tapping into knowledge and stories that have been passed down through the generations can make people feel connected to something bigger than themselves. Often, we carry within us an inner wisdom that we can lean into through this.
10. **Connect with nature** – Spending time in relationship with the land can be very special and healing in many cultures. If nature gives you a sense of peace and connection, spend more time going for walks and soaking in the natural beauty that you are surrounded by.

Resources:

BIPOC Healing and Wellness Centre

Phone: 587-760-1311

Email: info@bipochealingcentre.ca

linktr.ee/bipochealingcentre

Indigenous Psychological Services

Phone: (587) 594-9855

indigenoupsychologicalservices.com

Edmonton - Distress Line (24/7)

Phone: 780-482-4357

Quick Access

Distress Centre Calgary (24/7)

distresscentre.com

Phone: 403-366-4357

Help Right Now - CMHA Alberta Division

alberta.cmha.ca/find-help/help-right-now/

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Phone: (780) 424-7709

Email: info@emcn.ab.ca

emcn.ab.ca

Centre for Race and Culture

Phone: (780) 425-4644

cfrac.com

Creatives Empowered - Empowering Resources

creativesempowered.ca/resources

IBPOC Consultants Directory

creativesempowered.ca/consultants/

Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation

icaionline.org