


HEALTH

Black Women Must Take a Multifaceted Approach to Their Mental Health

By Alyssa Wilson 

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 Mental health advocate Joy D. Calloway spoke with BNC about why Black women should take a multifaceted approach at mental health.

IN SUMMARY

Speaker Joy D. Calloway is on a mission to teach Black women the skills they need to take control of their mental health amid societal attacks.

Tackling life as a Black woman comes with the weight of knowing several health conditions disproportionately impact you, being subjected to violence and often taking attacks from all sides. It is because of this that many Black women silently suffer through their mental health struggles.

According to [research](#) from Dr. Erica Richards, the Chair and Medical Director for the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Sibley Memorial Hospital, Black women are impacted deeply by depression. According to her research, women are twice as likely as men to experience an episode of major depression and African American women are half as likely to seek help.

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[Joy D. Calloway](#) is on a mission to help Black women realize the importance of their mental health and how to achieve it. Calloway, who hosts motivational presentations and training sessions, created the workshop [One Crisis From Crazy: Protecting and Maintaining your Mental and Emotional Health](#) because she understands how important prioritizing mental health is to success.

She is closing in on nearly a decade being a mental health advocate and her start down this path was personal. The catalyst for her involvement in the mental health space came from her nephew’s diagnosis of bipolar disorder, life’s hardships “kicking her in the face,” and the opportunity to run a community mental health organization. Since these three things helped her reach her calling, she’s been helping people take accountability in their mental health journey.

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Experience Joy D Calloway- Speaker Reel



As a Black woman herself, Calloway has personal and professional experience identifying the biggest threat to the mental and emotional wellbeing of Black women. “I would say first and foremost right now at this time in

this country, [it's] systemic racism," Calloway said. "When we are always looking over our shoulders not only concerned for ourselves but also concerned for our husbands, our sons, our brothers, that is an unbelievable pressure."

She believes another barrier is the way Black women hold their issues out of the public eye, letting them build up until they explode. The issues weighing heavy on Black women did not just fall out of thin air. Many of them are systemic and have plagued the Black community for years, beginning in their youth.

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Black girls are [oversexualized](#) and [over-disciplined](#) in American schools.

Calloway said changing the trajectory of how Black women are treated starts with the way Black girls are viewed. "Society has to understand that our children are children and we would like them to be and we've got to be part of this too," she said.

She also said negative mental health practices could be contributed to stigmas passed down from generation to generation in the Black community. From keeping problems within the realms of the family or only relying on faith to fix problems instead of seeking help, Calloway said the community needs to break free from those traditions.

She wants Black women to take control of their overall wellness and look out for other Black women who could be struggling. Through her experience, both personal and professional, she understands the importance of finding a sister circle, seeing a therapist, knowing how to spot when someone needs help and sitting still.

Sister Circle

A sister circle is a safe place Black women can come together to uplift and support each other. Reminiscing on a time one of her best friends helped her through an emotional stage, Calloway said these groups are important for women. "There are certain things that are just there, and especially when you have a sister circle, that is really about edifying and uplifting one another and supporting one another," she said.

See a Therapist

Calloway is also an advocate for seeing a therapist, and a Black one at that. She proudly asserted that she talks to both Jesus and her therapist about her problems "because one does not exclude the other." She said people need to take a multifaceted approach to their health, citing that weight loss does not just come from a change in diet; it also requires exercise. "The same thing applies with your mental and emotional wellness. So it might be therapy. It might be medication. It might be quiet time. It might be journaling," she said. "So we need to figure those things out and then make sure our children are seeing us do it."

Identifying Mental Health Struggles in Others

Calloway understands that identifying when someone else is having a mental health struggle can be difficult. She said the signs a person may be "mentally and emotionally degenerating" include isolation, mood swings,

addictive behaviors that are out of the norm and hopeless talk. If a person exhibits these behaviors for more than three weeks, then it's time to step in.

Sit in Stillness

Her personal experience with mental health has also allowed her to understand that adopting positive mental health practices do not happen overnight, but she said Black women can start by being still. “In the stillness is our peace and in the stillness are the answers,” she said. “And we don’t. We think it’s a luxury, but it’s actually a necessity.”

In addition to her work in the mental health space, Calloway is the interim CEO of [Planned Parenthood of Greater New York](#), where she works to enhance health care for New Yorkers.

She plans to turn her “One Crisis From Crazy” workshop into a book about her own journey to the mental health advocate she is today, hoping it will motivate and encourage Black women around the globe.

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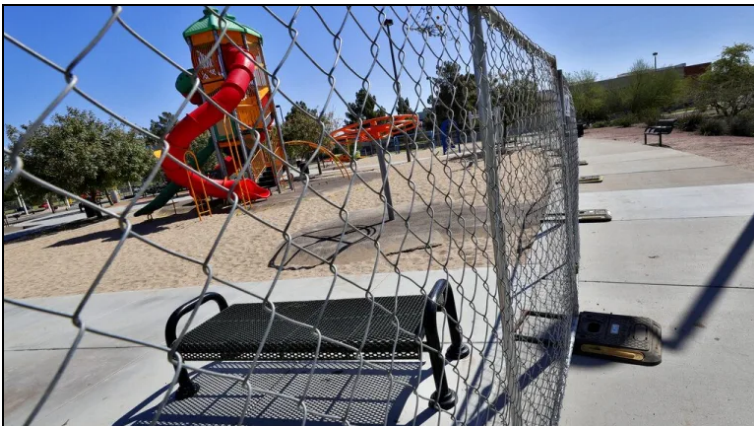




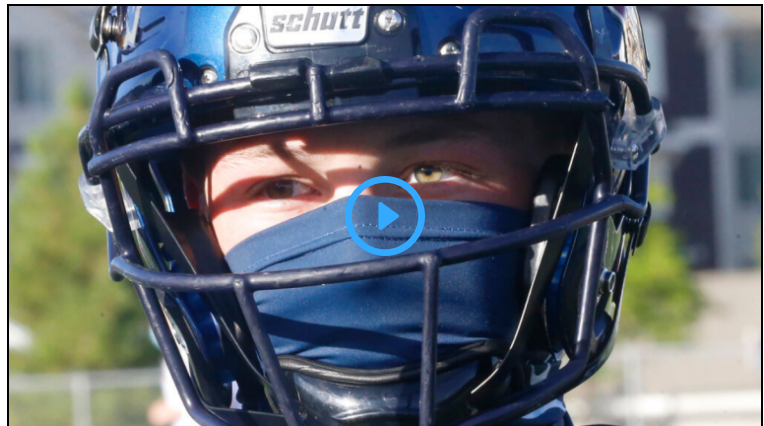
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