

Just Talking About It Gives Me Anxiety

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Abstract

Despite the progress made over the years, many people in the African American community are still apprehensive about discussing their mental health issues. Social stigmas about seeking professional help for mental illnesses such as anxiety are still prevalent among the African American community. Educating college-age African Americans about the importance of mental illnesses and mental health can potentially change their mindsets about seeking help.

Background/Purpose

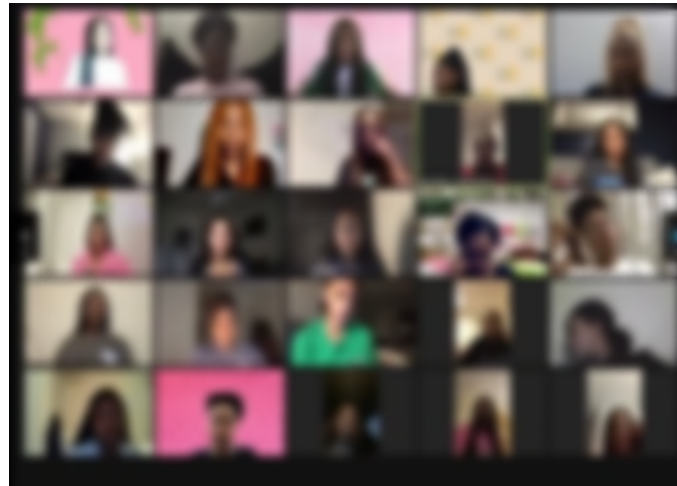
The aim of this project was to educate college-age African Americans about anxiety and raise awareness regarding this mental illness. Additionally, a goal was to promote a change in attitude and encourage people to take action of using effective methods to surmount the mental illness. An anxiety disorder is a type of mental illness that yields a perpetual feeling of fear and uneasiness that can often get worse over time, and ultimately cause an interference with daily activities such as job performance, schoolwork, and relationships (U.S. National Library of Medicine 2021). Anxiety disorders are divided into subcategories such as generalized anxiety disorder, phobia related disorders, and panic attacks. It is common for individuals suffering with an anxiety disorder to also have a co-occurring mental illness such as depression and stress (Anxiety and Depression Association of America).

Demographics

The targeted demographic includes African American adults between the ages 18-25 who attend Middle Tennessee State University as well as the reside in the Murfreesboro, TN and Nashville, TN areas.

Methods

- ▶ Soliciting member participation included a mass sharing of flyers and reposting via the social media platform Instagram
- ▶ A social intervention was conducted with a professional therapist via Zoom . As a result, a total of 44 participants attend the virtual informational
- ▶ Pre and post test surveys were sent out via google form links in the Zoom chat as a way to compare previously existing knowledge to acquired knowledge
- ▶ In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the form contained questions of non-identifying information and used initials and the numeric portion of addresses to match the documents



Student Lessons Learned

- ▶ Participants were well informed about the mental illness anxiety.
- ▶ Attendees were more comfortable with discussing their anxiety with their family and friends.
- ▶ Guests were still reluctant after the presentation to discuss their anxiety/mental health challenges with a mental health professionals.

Community Partners Acknowledge

- ▶ Ms. Jaha Martin, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at Tennessee Valley Healthcare System
- ▶ Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Eta Psi Chapter
- ▶ HBCU Wellness Project at Meharry Medical College
- ▶ Rutherford County Health Department

Conclusions

The participants were already quite knowledgeable about anxiety and the effective ways to surmount the mental illness. Although knowing the effective ways to treat the mental illness, participants identified they were still reluctant to seek professional help due to the comfort and advice they receive from their love ones.