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Black Women’s Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability
Edited by
Stephanie Y. Evans, Kanika Bell Thomas, and Nsenga Burton
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Book Description

Black Women's Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability creates a framework to positively impact Black women’s wellness. Editors Stephanie Evans, Kanika Bell Thomas, and Nsenga Burton build a framework based on the expressed need for the concept of balance in mental health assessment and practice. Their “BREATHE” model values characteristics of both strength and vulnerability. Dr. Evans, a professor of Black women’s intellectual history, Dr. Bell Thomas, a psychology professor and psychologist, and Dr. Burton, a media scholar, team up to survey historical and contemporary Black women’s narratives of health and freedom. They present a chorus of voices that exchange perspectives on race, gender, and wellness. This collaborative project brings together wellness workers who build on a longstanding history of creative approaches to improving Black women’s health. The dialogical approach sets a stage for traversing across bridges that unite academic disciplines and community agencies.

This collection of voices reflects feminist praxis and defines womanist peace that rejects both “super woman” stereotypes and “victim” caricatures. Critical and clear-eyed in outlining harrowing challenges, equal weight is given to struggle and triumph. General readers, students, and practitioners who work in areas of race and gender, nonviolence and peace, policy, non-profit, media, or psychology and counseling will benefit from this knowledge base. Black Women's Mental Health combines intellectual history, southern and urban municipal contexts, non-government activism, holistic practice, and mainstream therapeutic intervention so readers can better understand dimensions of challenges Black women face. Evans, Bell Thomas, and Burton along with invited authors offer concrete recommendations for today’s women who struggle to find effective approaches to deal with challenges to personal, social, economic, and political stability.

In Black Women’s Mental Health, over two dozen scholar-activists, practitioners, and analysts share empirical research, personal reflections, and strategies for transforming self and society. Benefiting from a legacy of social action and grounded in cutting-edge holistic approaches, particularly those practices that center Black women’s voices, this collaborative is both a culmination of past practices and a launching point for new directions.

This Black women’s mental health praxis proposes an interdisciplinary model of positive psychology. While issues pertinent to elder and adult women are essential areas addressed in this work, the authors also pay special attention to adolescent development to connect young women to tools necessary to navigate 21st century challenges.

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