BLACK AND RACIALIZED MENTAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP

FACILITATORS GUIDE

ActionDignity   LIONHEART FOUNDATION   Calgary   TD   RBC

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

The purpose of this program is to assist Black youth and other racialized youth to develop a critical understanding of mental health and the different factors that influence the quality of their individual and community mental health, and to develop leadership skills to promote and advocate for positive mental health for themselves, their families and immediate communities, and the broader community.
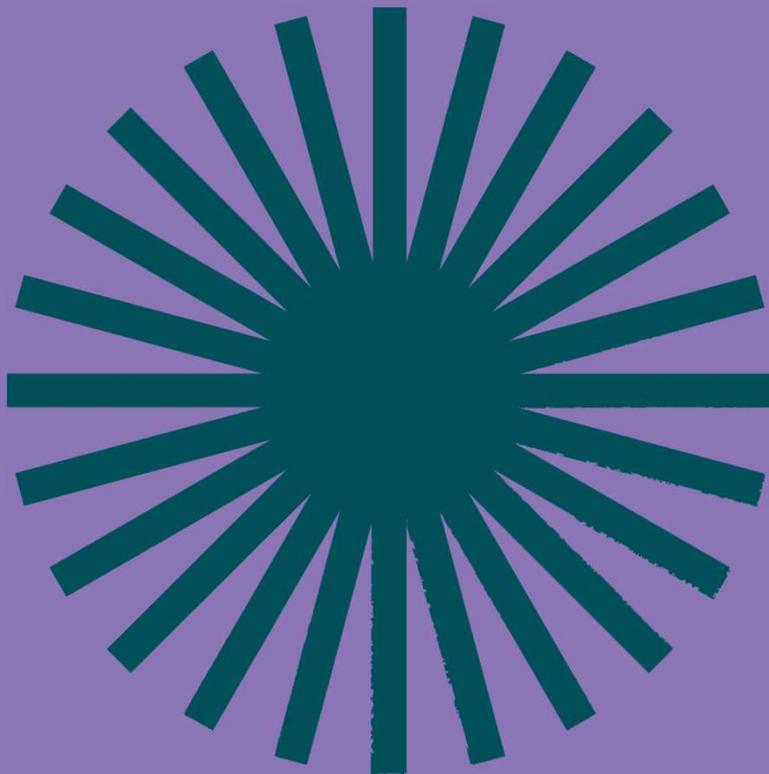
PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Within academic spheres, there is a growing understanding of the capacity and imperative to develop youth leaders. As mentioned by Redmond and Dolan (2014, p. 261), "Youth leadership programmes represent a tangible way of harnessing the energy and vitality of young people to contribute meaningfully to their communities as well as benefiting the community directly from their endeavours." In the means of promoting social inclusion, and social support, youth leadership is a critical factor in recruitment, retention and sustainability of programs catered towards youth (Morton & Montgomery, 2012).

Youth leadership is imperative in addressing and resisting racism and specifically anti-Black racism. The intent of this facilitator guidebook is to support youth groups in engaging in conversations around mental health and belonging among peers, in their own communities and in the greater community.

Critical understanding is a significant part of leadership. Research shows that people who have become leaders in Black Lives Matters were exposed to critical awareness of racism through which they developed skills to address it (Mosley et al., 2021). The proposed themes of this facilitator guide must do that, by encouraging youth to become critically aware of their own experiences witnessing anti-Black racism (ABR), processing ABR, and acting critically against ABR (Mosley et al., 2021, p. 5).

WITNESSING:
- ABR Bearing Witness to ABR
- Experiencing Racial Trauma

PROCESSING ABR
- Cognitive Growth
- Intersectional Growth
- Behavioural Growth

ACTING CRITICALLY AGAINST ABR
- Utilizing Black Racial Justice Activist Approaches to Activism

This framework aligns with Action Dignity's hope to empower Black and other racialized youth to validate their lived experiences of racism, to become critically aware of the support systems available to help address the mental health struggles that result from everyday racism, build community, and become leaders in advocating for racial justice and positive mental health for all.

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MENTAL HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

The content and activities of this guide critically builds on existing associations between racism and social determinants of health and health disparities. Research shows links between the impacts of exposure to racism that can manifest and develop throughout the lifespan (Gee et al., 2012). Racism can happen at the individual, interpersonal, and systems levels (Khanlou et al., 2002), thus requiring being addressed at all those levels.

In this facilitator guide, emphasis is on the mental health of Black youth. Black people in diverse societies confront racism from a very young age (Rollo, 2018). Research shows that early childhood racism constitutes a form of traumatic experience that persists throughout the lifespan with long-lasting health effects (Gibbons et al., 2012). A key health effect that stems from such racism, is mental health, and racial trauma. A study by Troyna and Hatcher (2018) conducted with Black children on their perceptions of racism indicated 88 percent of the children had at least one experience with racial discrimination, and 11.6 percent had experienced racism in at least half (12) of the 23 situations addressed in the questionnaire. The racism seemed to be both in schools and in the community, and both peers and adults were perceived to be perpetrators. Racism from peers includes teasing, social exclusion, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment, making Black children and youth feel less safe and connected to their schools compared to those who do not experience racism.

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organization)

These experiences, occurring at the micro and macro levels, result in extreme stress and negative mental health outcomes (Pieterse et al., 2012; Salami et al., 2022, Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000; Williams & Etkins, 2021). According to Iruka et al. (2021), "the prevalence of racial disparities experienced by Black children and their families and communities in almost all sectors of life and outcomes indicates a pernicious and oppressive systemic culture—anti-black racism" (p. 177-178).

As cited in Iruka et al. (2021), Sawyer (2008) identified four core concepts that define anti-black racism:
1. History of oppression and unequal incorporation in the social, political, and economic life of the nation;
2. Negative and limiting stereotypes that operate to define that group;
3. Formal legal and informal barriers to achievement; and
4. Ideology that justifies the domination and oppression of the group.

Waldron (2021, p. 31) summarizes the multiple effects of anti-Black racism in these words:

"Racial bias against Black people prevails because a blatant disregard for Black life, along with notions of Black expendability, is structured into our social, economic, political, and legal systems. From education, employment, and health care, to policing and the criminal justice system, our social systems are imbued with White supremacist logic and ideologies."

However, as noted by King et al. (2021, p. 4),
 "...the daily traumatic experiences of being erased, discriminated against, disadvantaged, and criminalized at all levels of the social structures continue to be largely ignored, under researched, misrepresented and thus, unaddressed."
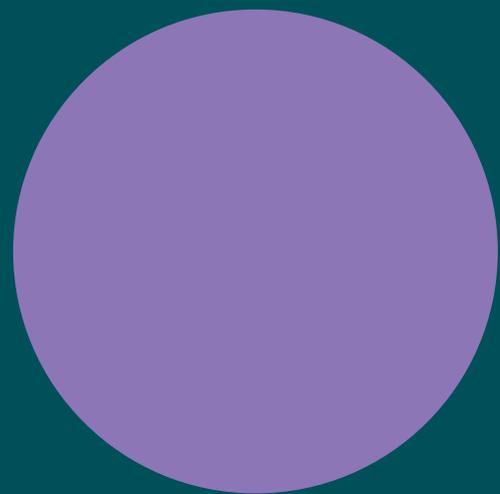
SECTION 2: ROLES AND FACILITATION
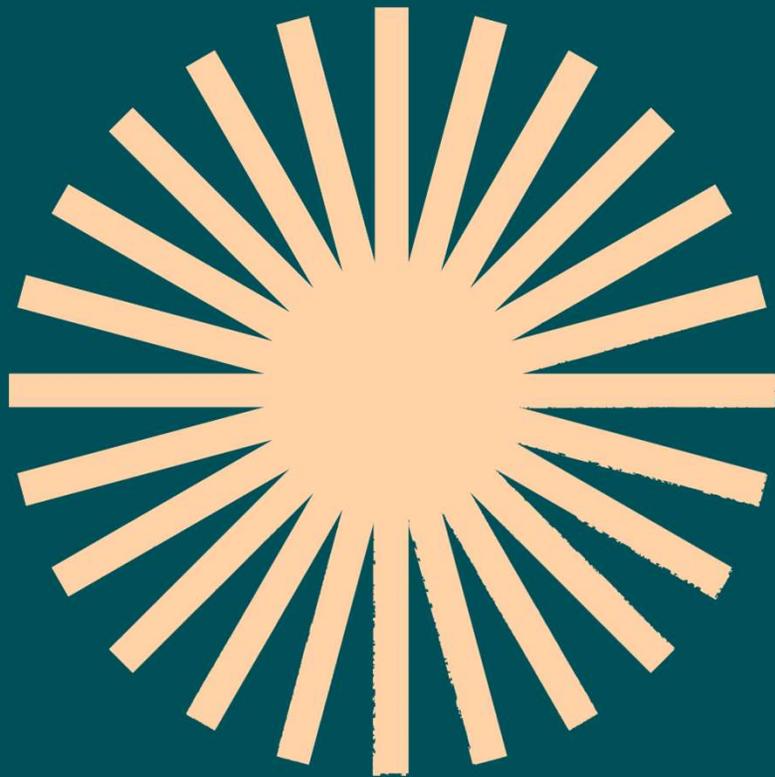
WHAT IS A FACILITATOR?

As the heart of the program, the facilitator **guides** the journey of discovery and empowerment for the youth. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to create a vibrant atmosphere where participants feel safe and supported to express themselves and explore critical and sensitive topics.

The facilitator brings the content to life, weaving in stories and real-world examples that resonate with the participants. One of the qualities of a good facilitator is to listen attentively and mobilize different resources to turn any topic into an experiential learning opportunity for the participants. In the context of this guide, a good facilitator is able to dynamic activities like creating zines or community murals, encouraging youth to express their thoughts and feelings creatively. By fostering open dialogue, he/she helps participants connect their personal experiences to broader issues of mental health and racism. **The facilitator's ultimate goal is to nurture a supportive community where young voices are amplified and empowered to lead.**

WHAT DO THE PARTICIPANTS DO?

Participants are active learners and storytellers, diving into discussions and sharing their personal experiences. They collaborate with peers, express themselves creatively, and transform through the process. Transformed participants are great ambassadors of change within their communities.

Based on experience, people participate differently in group activities. They include doers, thinkers, and feelings fillers. These talents complement each other to enhance best learning experiences, personal and social transformation. Engaged participants take ownership of the topics of discussions, and integrate them through shared experiences of personal and community stories, and mutual learning. In the context of mental health, it is crucial for participants to be given opportunities to reflect on their own journeys with mental health. Artistic activities and storytelling enhance self-exploration and externalization of internalized issues, such as racism and its impacts. Meaningful participation builds a network of support, empowering participants to confront challenges together, support each other, and celebrate gains together.

# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARTICIPANT AND FACILITATOR?
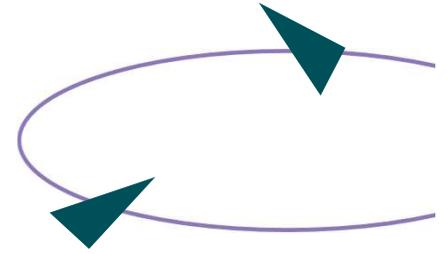
The facilitator and participant each plays unique but complementary roles in the program. The facilitator acts as the guiding force, leading sessions with energy and expertise, creating a safe space for open dialogue, and presenting engaging content that sparks curiosity. The facilitator also designs interactive activities that encourage participants to explore their thoughts and feelings while nurturing their leadership skills, and having fun.

Together, facilitators and participants create a vibrant environment where knowledge flows freely and reciprocally. A well facilitated session leaves everyone feeling empowered. In the context of mental health, group facilitation is also healing and has the potential to contribute to improved mental health, critical awareness and racial justice.

In this collaborative space, facilitators and participants inspire each other, create a brave space that allows participants to share authentically and in confidence. Together, they work hand in hand to promote mental health awareness and advocate for racial justice.

TOWARDS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION
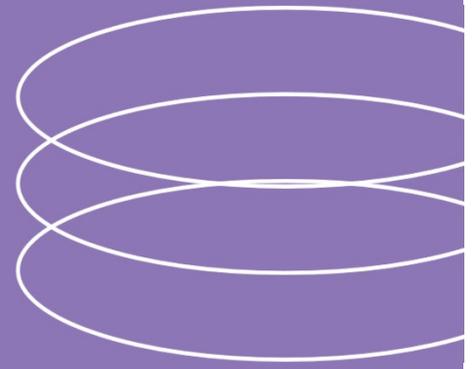
Before we begin our work and journey, it is important to take time to acknowledge the Indigenous land and its peoples. By their unlimited generosity towards settlers. Throughout the duration of the learning journey, facilitators and participants are encouraged to learn and continue to honour and respect the Indigenous peoples of the land in which we play and conduct our work.

Land Acknowledgements bring recognition and honor to the Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the lands we occupy since time immemorial (NAHLA, 2019).

As an ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation, youth are encouraged to create and share a land acknowledgement and personal reflection statement at the start of each session to honour, and affirm our commitment to the history, to learn and unlearn and continue to work intentionally towards truth and reconciliation.

This work is just the beginning, and is ever growing. For more resources on allyship towards truth and reconciliation, please see the following resources:

CAMH Guidance for Honouring the Land and Ancestors Through
Land Acknowledgements

Whose Land

Journey Towards Indigenous Allyship Toolkit

Generation 4 Equality: Allyship Toolkit

SECTION 3: LEARNING SESSIONS
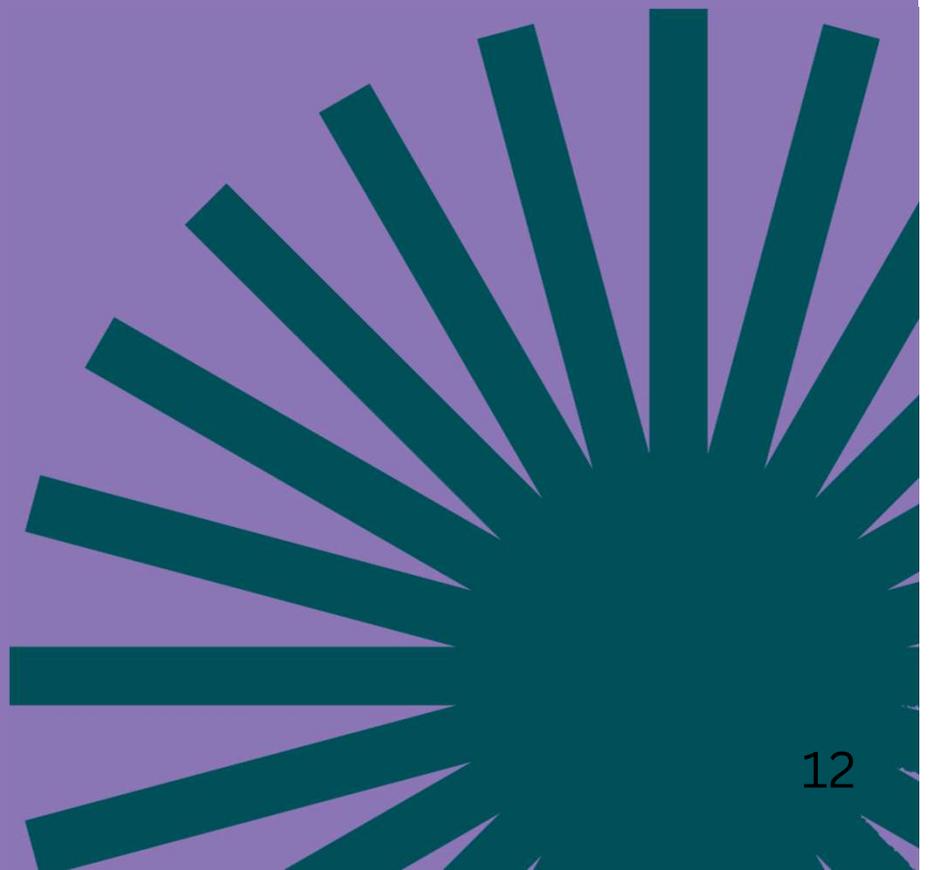
ABOUT

The proposed facilitator guide consists of a total of 10, 2-hour sessions that should ideally span 5 weeks' time. The sessions are a combination of content delivery, and then reflection allowing youth to learn but also engage critically and thoughtfully with the content that is presented.

The purpose of an alternating content and reflection/activity session is to allow youth to digest the content on their own, and then return, ready to engage in activities that will support the deepening of their learning and understanding.

ON REFLECTION:

Homework reflections are an individual opportunity for youth and facilitators to reflect between learning sessions, check-in before the next session, and foster further processing through shared activities. Guiding questions will be shared as an opening reflection to start each reflection.

PROJECT SESSION PLAN

1

Introductions/
Mental Health

Reflection 1

Introduction of
Zines

2

Mental Health
in the System
(Macro)
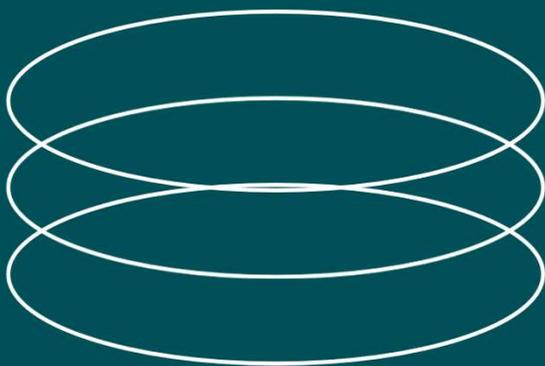
Reflection 2

Chalk/Outside
Paint Mural

3

Mental Health with Family, Friends and Community

PROJECT SESSION PLAN

Reflection 3

Creative Writing Session/Reflection Session

4

When do you know?
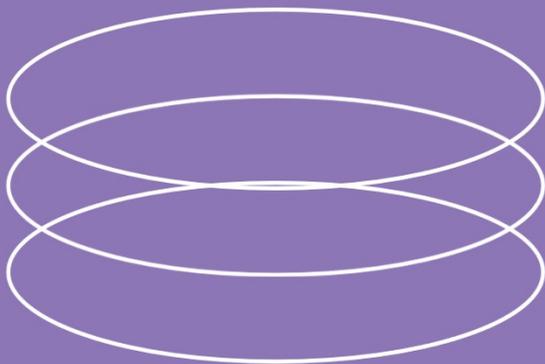
Reflection 4

Body Mapping Activity

pn

5

Mental Health Interventions

PROJECT SESSION PLAN

6

Wrap Up Session (Reflections)
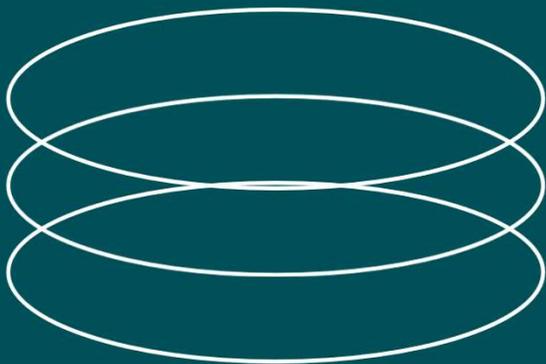
SESSION 1

Introductions/
Mental Health

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 1:
- The facilitator and youth get to know each other
- Become familiar of the Youth Leadership Program at Action Dignity and their place in it
- Develop an understanding of mental health
- Initiate the articulation of one's role in improving personal and community mental health.

Suggested Materials:
Use the Zines 101 guide as a reference.
- Presentation Slides (Introduction)
- Printed or digital copies of the Zines 101 Guide
- Art supplies (scissors, glue, colored paper, etc.)
- Computers or tablets (if digital zine creation is preferred)

Suggested Resources/Readings:
- Being Black in Canada: Youtube Video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ntn0Nz8OT44)

SESSION 1

1. **Introductions (30 minutes)**
   - Activity: Facilitate introductions of group. Provide overview of the project, and Action Dignity Youth Leadership Initiatives.

2. **Program Overview: Our Journey Together (30 minutes)**
   - Discussion: Discuss the journey together and guidelines of the sessions (e.g., collaboration, mutual compassion, respect, active engagement). Explain the delivery methods, including lectures, small group activities, and individual optional reflections.

3. **Introduction to Zines (15 minutes)**
   - Activity: Present an overview of zines, explaining their purpose, history, and relevance in expressing personal and collective experiences.
   - Discussion: Explain how zines can be a powerful medium for discussing mental health and creating meaning of lived experiences.

4. **Drafting Zine Foundations (30 minutes)**
   - Activity: Each youth drafts the initial concept for their zine, focusing on themes related to mental health. Discuss ideas, potential themes, and how they want to frame their zine's message.
   - Collaborative Brainstorming: Work in small groups to share ideas and provide feedback on each other's zine concepts.

5.**Reflection and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)**
- Reflection Questions:
  - What are you looking forward to the most during this learning journey?
  - What are you hoping to learn during our time together, and what are you hoping to teach others?
  - What themes are you considering for your zine?
- Discussion: Share reflections on the zine planning process and plan next steps for further development.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Consider: How can youth continue to connect outside sessions?

Youth can consider platforms of communication!

REFLECTION HOMEWORK 1
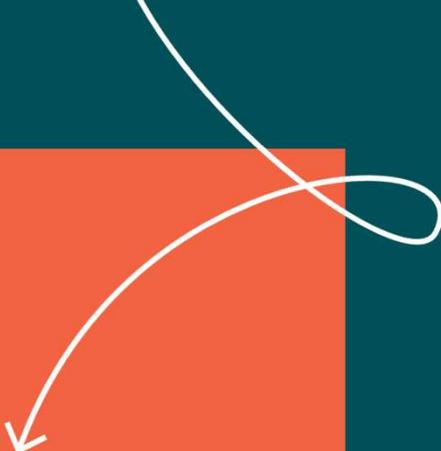
Working on Zines

ON REFLECTION :
Homework reflections are an individual opportunity for youth and facilitators to reflect between learning sessions, check-in before the next session, and foster further processing through shared activities. Guiding questions will be shared as an opening reflection to start each reflection.

Suggested Materials:
Use the Zines 101 guide as a reference.
- Presentation Slides (Introduction)
- Printed or digital copies of the Zines 101 Guide
- Art supplies (scissors, glue, colored paper, etc.)
- Computers or tablets (if digital zine creation is preferred)

1. **Guiding Questions**
    - What themes have you considered for your zine
    - How did you choose the theme and concept for your zine?
    - How can the zines shape your own personal learning journey?
    - What aspects of the zine creation process have been most engaging or challenging?
    - If comfortable, share reflections with peers on the zine creation process and plan next steps for further development.
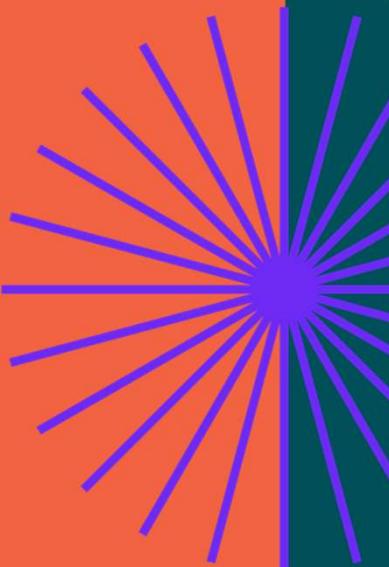
2. **Zine Creation Time!**
    - Activity: Begin creating the first sections of the zine based on drafted ideas. Encourage experimentation with layout, design, and content that reflects participants mental health themes.
    - Support and Guidance: Provide individual support as needed for layout, design, and content creation.
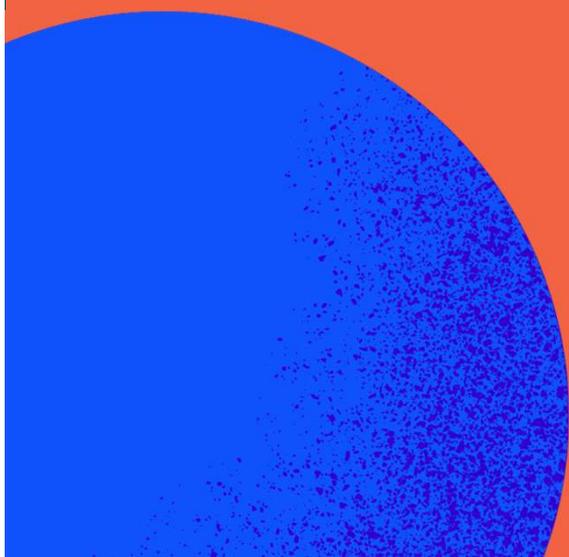
SESSION 2

Mental Health in the System (Macro)

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 2:
- Critically analyze systemic barriers in mental health services for Black and racialized youth
- Identify and evaluate existing resources
- Reflect on personal experiences and strategies for navigating and overcoming existing barriers.

Suggested Suggested Materials:
- **Slide Deck:** A slide deck with key points outlining the concept of systemic barriers in mental health (including definitions, examples of barriers like discrimination, inappropriate services, and unprepared professionals)
- **Whiteboard/Flip Chart:** To document discussion within groups, and between larger group
- **Laptop/Devices:** To Research Existing Resources (Activity 3)

Suggested Resources/Readings:
- Gajaria, A., Guzder, J., & Rasasingham, R. (2021). What's race got to do with it? A proposed framework to address racism's impacts on child and adolescent mental health in Canada. J Can Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry, 30(2):131-137.
- Ted talk: Black Folk Mental Health: Generational Trauma, Traditions & Truth | Jelan Agnew | TEDxDelthorneWomen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1Bn9OWDqF0

Session Activity:
Chalk Mural (60 Minutes)

This session will start outside, and will allow youth to engage with systems outside of the typical classroom setting. This activity will be dependent on location for youth but will encourage youth to draw and engage with outside structures in re-imagining mental health in the greater system. Reflection will be integrated throughout the activity, and there will be an opening and closing gathering with youth to reflect on their week, and hopes moving forward.

Please note, this activity can be modified to be conducted individually indoors with flipchart paper/markers. Individual alternatives will be marked with *

Suggested Materials
- Chalk or Outdoor Paint - Markers*, or Paint*
- Brick Wall/Tarmac - Flipchart Paper*

1. Opening Questions: Starting Reflection
- How do you think Black and racialized youth experience the mental health system differently than non-racialized youth? What makes their experience unique or more challenging?
- In your opinion, what are some of the most effective ways to navigate the mental health system and ensure that you are accessing the right care? What challenges might someone face in this process?
- How can community-based mental health programs and services be more effective in supporting Black and racialized youth? What role can peers, family, and community members play?

SESSION 2

2.Activity Guiding Questions
- Setting Place:
  - When you think about the "system" of mental health care, what comes to mind? How does this system work in your community or environment?
  - Who do you think should be involved in mental health services and support? What roles do different people (like professionals, family, peers, and community) play?
- Connecting with Self:
  - What does "re-imagining" the mental health system mean to you?
  - What changes would you like to see in how mental health services are offered, especially for youth like yourself?
- Re-Imagining:
  - How would you change or redesign the places or systems you see in your community to make them more welcoming for youth who need mental health support?
  - What would your ideal "mental health space" look like? What features would it have that help people feel calm, safe, and heard?
  - As you explore these spaces, what do you notice about them? How do they make you feel? Do they inspire thoughts about mental health, care, or support?
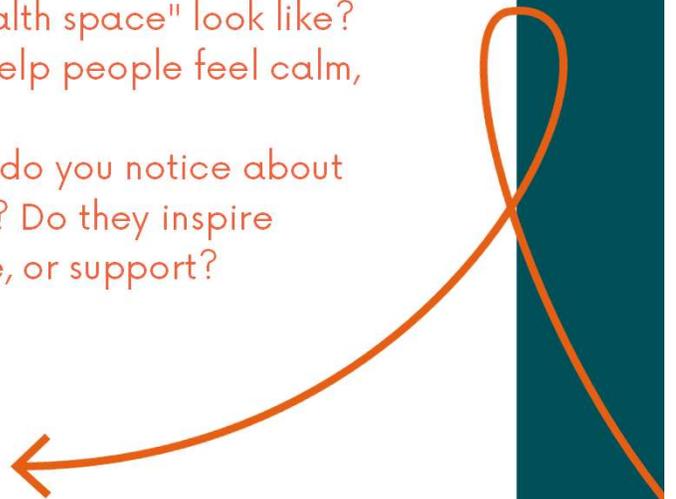
SESSION 2

After the completion of the activity, the session will continue inside with participants.

1.**Introduction to Systemic Barriers (10 minutes)**
- Activity: Lecture and Discussion
  - Introduce systemic barriers in mental health services, focusing on issues such as inappropriate services, discrimination, and unprepared professionals.
  - Present an overview of these barriers based on the assigned readings and other relevant sources.

2.**Voices of Black and Racialized Youth (20 minutes)**
- Group Activity + Discussion
  - Facilitate a discussion where participants reflect on whether their personal experiences align with the presented systemic barriers.
  - Encourage participants to share their perspectives on how these barriers impact them, their peers and communities.

3.**Exploring Available Resources (20 Minutes)**
- Activity: Research and Analysis
  - Present an overview of existing resources and services available for mental health support, focusing on the Mental Health Commission of Canada and other relevant local organizations.
  - Discuss the importance of understanding these resources and navigating the mental health system.

4.**Closing and Summary (10 Minutes)**
- Activity: Summary and Next Steps
  - Summarise key points from the session.
  - Outline practical steps for participants to take in addressing and navigating systemic barriers in mental health services.
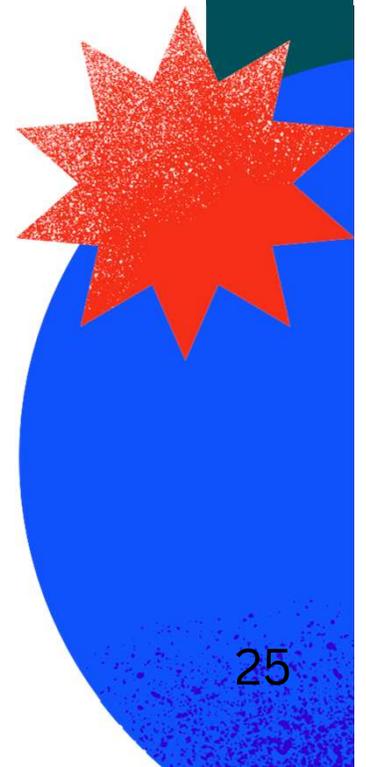
SESSION 2

ZINE DEVELOPMENT!

- Systemic Barriers in Mental Health: Illustrate or write about specific systemic barriers faced by racialized youth (e.g., lack of culturally relevant services, discrimination in mental health care).

- Strategies for Overcoming Barriers: Include effective approaches for addressing these barriers (e.g., advocacy, community support programs).

- Resource Integration: Design a page with helpful mental health services and support networks (e.g., local hotlines, online resources).

- Personal Reflection Summary: Summarize how systemic barriers have impacted you personally and outline your plans to address these issues.
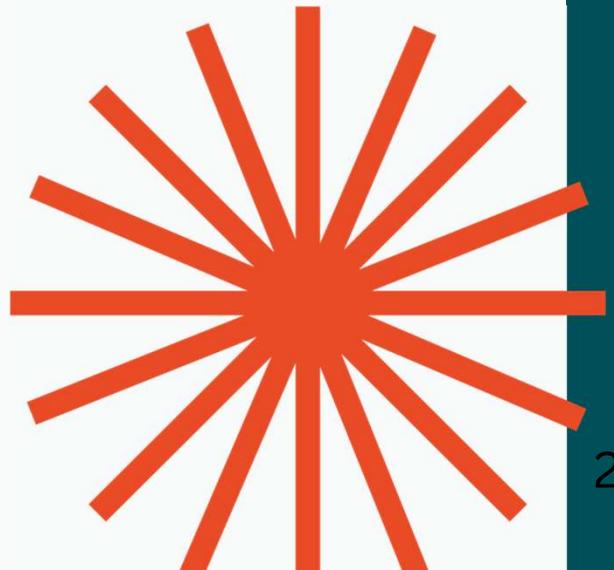
REFLECTION HOMEWORK 2

ON REFLECTION :
Homework reflections are an individual opportunity for youth and facilitators to reflect between learning sessions, check-in before the next session, and foster further processing through shared activities. Guiding questions will be shared as an opening reflection to start each reflection.

1.**Resource Mapping, Sharing and Consciousness Raising**
- Research and compile a list of additional resources and services.
- Map how these areas may relate to one another and support Black and racialized youth.
- Prepare to findings with the other participants and discuss how to effectively navigate and utilize these resources.

2.**Reflection and Strategy Discussion**
- Reflection Questions
  - Reflect on personal experiences with accessing mental health services: What challenges did you face? How did you address or challenge these challenges?
  - How do we challenge inadequate or discriminatory mental health programs?
  - How can we effectively navigate the mental health system and advocate for ourselves and others?

SESSION 3
Mental Health with Family, Friends, and Community (Mezzo-Interpersonal)
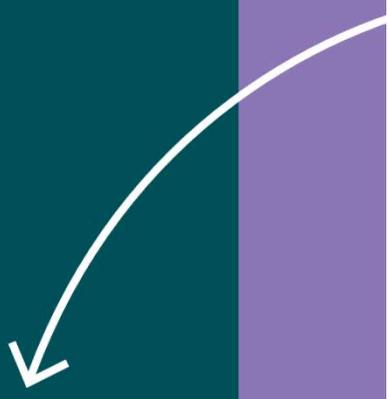
(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 3:
- Develop an understanding of the significance of family and social support in mental health
- Identify mental health barriers and enablers in interpersonal relationships
- Explore ways to create a sense of belonging and mental health wellness.

Suggested Materials:
- Slide Deck or handouts on family roles in mental health
- Reflection prompts/Discussion prompts
- Whiteboard or flipchart for noting barriers and enablers
- Paper and markers for brainstorming
- Examples of belonging strategies

Suggested Readings/Resources:
- Fante-Coleman, T., Allen, K., Booker, M., Craigg, A., & Jackson-Best, F. (2023). "If You Prayed More, You Would Feel Better": The Dual Nature of Religion and Spirituality on Black Youths' Mental Health and Access to Care in Canada. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 1-18.

SESSION 3

1.**Introduction to the Significance of Family and Social Support (45 minutes)**
   - Lecture: Present the role of family and social support in mental health, highlighting common challenges that families face.
   - Activity: Reflect on personal experiences with family dynamics and social support.

2.**Identifying Barriers and Enablers (30 minutes)**
   - Group Discussion: Explore barriers in day-to-day interactions with family, friends, and social support networks.
   - Workshop: Identify and discuss enablers and sources of support that contribute to a positive mental health environment.

3.**Creating a Sense of Belonging (30 minutes)**
   - Activity: Engage in a workshop where participants brainstorm and share strategies for creating and framing a sense of belonging within their relationships within family (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.), with peers and communities (e.g., ethnic group, church, social network).

REFLECT!

How do we create belonging, and frame belonging in our different relationships?

4.Reflection and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)
- Reflection Questions:
  - How do we create a sense of belonging in our different relationships?
  - How can we frame our relationships to enhance feelings of belonging?
- Discussion: Share reflections and insights on building a supportive and inclusive interpersonal environment

ZINE DEVELOPMENT!

- **Mental Health Barriers and Enablers within the Family:** Reflect on how your family impacts your mental health, both positively and negatively. Identify common barriers, like stigma or lack of understanding, and enablers, like emotional support or open communication.
- **Strategies to Strengthen Enablers and Minimize Barriers:** Share effective strategies that have helped improve mental health within your family. Focus on ways to reduce stigma, foster trust, and encourage open conversations about mental health.
- **Building a Supportive Family Environment:** Create a guide with tips on how families can become more supportive of mental health. Include practical ways to improve communication and create a safe, understanding environment at home.

REFLECTION HOMEWORK 3

Creative Writing Activity

ON REFLECTION :
Homework reflections are an individual opportunity for youth and facilitators to reflect between learning sessions, check-in before the next session, and foster further processing through shared activities. Guiding questions will be shared as an opening reflection to start each reflection.

Suggested Materials:
- Creative Writing Exemplars
- Flip Chart Paper
- Writing Paper
- Writing Utensils (Pencil/Pen etc.)
- Computers or tablets (if typing is preferred)
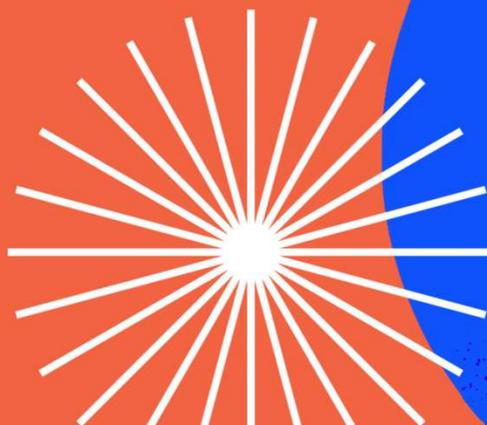
1.Reflection Questions:

- Can you think of a time when you felt truly supported by someone in your family or social circle? What made that support meaningful for you?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt disconnected or unsupported by those close to you? What challenges did that bring, and how did it affect your mental health?
- What qualities or actions from others help you feel a sense of belonging and connection within your family, community, or social network?

2.Guidelines on Creative Writing:

This will be an opportunity for youth to share their experiences with their families, friends and communities while allowing them to engage in a form of creative writing.

Forms of Creative Writing (Examples):
- Poetry
- A Letter
- Personal Message to Self

PART 1: Timed Free Writing (Write Attack)!

Take a few moments to write freely about your relationships with friends, family, and your community. How do these relationships affect your mental health, both positively and negatively? Think about times when you've felt supported or misunderstood. What does a healthy relationship look like to you, and how can we help each other maintain good mental health in our communities? Don't worry about grammar or structure! Just let your thoughts flow

PART 2: Formatting

Now that you've written your thoughts, take a moment to reflect on the words that stand out the most to you. Are there any phrases or ideas that feel particularly powerful?

- **Poem -** Use these to craft a poem that captures your feelings about your relationships with friends, family, and community. It doesn't have to rhyme or follow a set structure—just let the words flow. Think about how you can use imagery or emotion to express your experiences.
- **Letter -** Use your writing to craft a letter that is meaningful and personal, focusing on the connections you have with others! Consider who you may want to address this letter to.
- **Message to Self -** If you could send a message to yourself about your mental health and relationships, what would it say? Use your writing as a foundation to create a personal message—something that reminds you of your strength, your needs, or your goals for the future. This is a chance to speak kindly and supportively to yourself

PART 3: Sharing

Youth may feel empowered to share their work amongst the group. Please consider that these letters may be personal, and are reflective of each individual. Encourage youth to share a theme, or a reflection instead if they do not want to share their written work.
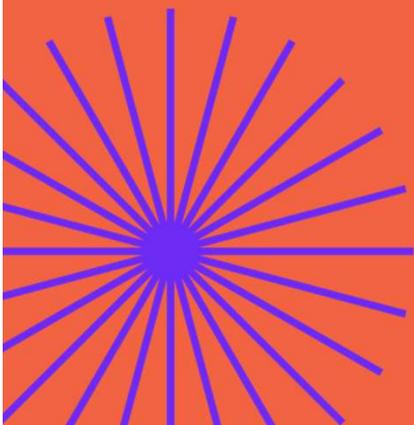
SESSION 4

When Do You Know, You Need Help?

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 4:
- Recognize personal mental health needs
- Identify signs and symptoms of mental health issues and disorders
- Develop awareness of existing mental health resources and support systems

Suggested Materials:
- Kahoot
- Slide Decks
- List of local support services and hotlines (see Appendix)
- Flipchart Paper: for resource mapping

Suggested Resources/Handouts:
- Bernard, W., & Este, D. (2005). Resiliency and young African Canadian males. Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts, 433–454.
- Tulli-Shah, M., Welch, O., & Onah, E. (2024). Black Youth Mentorship: Project Artemo and Opportunities for Proactive Cross-Sector Mental Wellness Support. Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 42(4), 73-89.
- [Youth and Mental Health 101](#)
- [Youth and Suicide](#)
- [The Mental Health Strategy for Canada: A Youth Perspective](#)

SESSION 4

Session Starting Activity:
Body Mapping (60 minutes)

Suggested Materials:
- **Flip Chart/Large Paper** – To create a life-sized outline of the body (one for each participant or one large shared body map).
- **Various Art Supplies/Drawing Utensils–** To allow participants to color, highlight, and detail specific areas on the body map where they feel different physical sensations or emotions.
- **Stickers or Coloured Dots** – To mark areas of the body where certain emotions or physical sensations are felt. These can also be used to highlight areas where participants feel discomfort or need support.
- **Post-it Notes** – For adding notes or reflections on specific areas of the body or emotions.
- **Suggested Guides:**
  - [Body mapping](#)
  - [Body Map: Storytelling as Research](#)

Body Mapping Activity
The facilitated body mapping activity will ask youth to map their own bodies, and how they are feeling. This will allow youth to reflect between the relationship of physical and mental health and what signs and symptoms they are able to notice in their bodies, name, and indicate when they might need support. Reflections will be integrated throughout the activity.

SESSION 4

Guided Activity:

1. Initial Reflection – Preparing to Map Your Body
- Draw your body map (any position) and add your feelings to it.
- What are the feelings you wrote down?
- Where are they located in your body?
- Take a deep breath, and pay attention to those feelings. What does your body feel like in general?
- Is there any part of your body that feels particularly heavy, light, tight, warm, or relaxed? What does this look like? What imagery or metaphor would you use to describe the predominant feeling?

2. Mapping the Body:
- Where do you feel calm, comfortable, or at peace in your body today? Circle or highlight them.
- Are there parts of your body where you feel energy, strength, or excitement?
- Do you feel any discomfort in specific body parts, like your head, chest, stomach, or shoulders? What could be the sources of these feelings?
- If you feel anxious or stressed, where in your body do you feel it? (Heart, stomach, chest, etc.)
- When you're feeling happy or relaxed, where in your body do you feel light or expansive?
- Are there any spots on your body where you hold particular emotions? Use specific examples.
- Where do you feel connected to your body? Where do you feel most grounded or in touch with yourself?

3. Connecting External to Internal:

- How do your relationships with family, friends, or peers affect the way your body feels?
- In the last week or so, can you recall how your body reacted to your different environments (e.g., at home, school, or other community setting)? What was happening around you? What did you or someone else do to join in your feelings?

4. Activity Reflection:

Once the mapping is done, these questions guide participants in reflecting on what they've learned about their bodies and emotions through the process. Opportunity for youth to share their products.

- What did you learn about your body through this exercise?
- How does your body reflect the way you've been feeling emotionally over the past week or so?
- Were there any surprises in how your body feels in certain areas, or how it connects with your emotions?
- Did you discover any places in your body where you feel tense, anxious, or tired that you hadn't noticed before?
- How do you feel now that you've mapped your body? Do you feel more connected to your physical self?
- What emotions or physical sensations are you going to pay more attention to in the future?
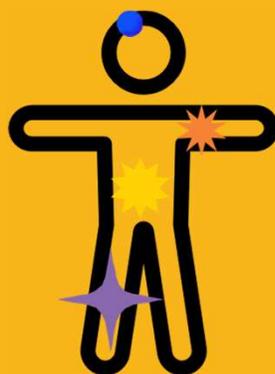
SESSION 4

Lecture and Discussion:

1.Supporting Others and Identifying Signs (30 minutes)
- Understand signs and symptoms of mental health disorders and ways to support others.
- Interactive Quiz: Mental Health Knowledge Check: Use Kahoot to test understanding of signs and symptoms, with immediate feedback.

2.Resources and Support Systems (15 minutes)
- Interactive Exercise: Support Network Building (20 minutes): In pairs, create a list of potential sources of help and support, then share summaries with the group.

3.Reflection and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)
- Reflection Questions: Personal Insights:
  - What strategies and resources have you found most and least effective in your mental health journey?
  - How can you apply what you've learned about recognizing when you need help and supporting others in need?

REFLECT!

What has supported you the best, what has not been helpful?

SESSION 4

ZINE DEVELOPMENT!

- Personal Experiences with Seeking Help: Illustrate or write about your own experiences with seeking mental health support. Include any challenges or successes you experienced.
- Effective and Ineffective Support Strategies: Create a page highlighting strategies that have worked well for you and those that have not. Use visuals or infographics to make this engaging.
- Utilizing Resources and Safe Spaces: Design a guide or map showing how you plan to use mental health resources and identify safe spaces. Include tips on accessing and making the most of these resources. Also, add some protective resources to minimize non-useful mechanisms. Be as specific as you can be.

REFLECTION HOMEWORK 4

Suggested Materials:
- **Completed Body Map Exercise**
- **Art Supplies/Drawing Utensils–** To allow participants to color, highlight, and detail specific areas on the body map where they feel different physical sensations or emotions.
- **Stickers or Colored Dots** – To mark areas of the body where certain emotions or physical sensations are felt. These can also be used to highlight areas where participants feel discomfort or need support.
- **Post-it Notes** – For adding notes or reflections on specific areas of the body or emotions.
- **Suggested Guides:**
  - [Body mapping](#)
  - [Body Map: Storytelling as Research](#)
  - [Summary on the basic emotions and their functions](#)
  - [Examples of body maps from previous groups](#)

Reflect on the Activity and Learnings from the session
Youth are encouraged to add to their Body Maps for post-session reflection exercise.
- How can you take care of the areas of your body that are feeling tense, sore, or overwhelmed?
- What are some things you can do to help your body feel calm, grounded, or energized?
- When you're feeling off or out of balance, what are some self-care practices you can turn to?
- Are there any habits or actions that help your body release stress or feel more in tune with your emotions?
- Think about the parts of your body that feel strong or energized. What are some things you do that make these areas feel empowered?

40

Draw →

Hobbies
- The gym
- daydreaming
- Scrapbooking
(t b c)

Who is impacted by me?
- My sister (& my brother)
- My self
- all those that care for me

What/Who made me
- My family
- South Africa
- Nigeria

If - How do you see yourself? What are your strengths, hobbies,

you to become who you are today?

impacted by who you are today? espessially your positive

Examples of modified body maps created by other youth

What makes me Resilient
- feeling our feelings
- Resiliency also looks like breaking down & conti pushing on regardless
- learning from our past

- literature
- Practicing my make up routine
- Doing my hair & lashes

What shaped / Who made me
- God
- My parents
- The people/family I grew up around
- The newspapers/Books & music I listen to

Who is impacted by me
- my siblings.
- My future self.
- The Children I work with /for.

is the best

Baking/cooking
Eating   yum

media

What shaped me
- family
- food
- friends
- nigeria
- south Africa

Photogaphy

SESSION 5

Mental Health Interventions

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 5:
1. Develop an understanding of mental health care access
2. Explore different therapeutic modalities
3. Develop the ability to select relevant mental health therapist while knowing one's own rights to health and mental health care access

Suggested Materials:
- **Slide Deck and/or handouts:** on key mental health approaches and their key features
- **FlipChart Paper:** Resource Mapping
- **Writing Utensils**

Suggested Readings/Resources:
- Kugelmass, H. (2016). "Sorry, I'm Not Accepting New Patients" an audit study of access to mental health care. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 57(2), 168-183.
- Lee, E., & Bhuyan, R. (2013). Negotiating within whiteness in cross-cultural clinical encounters. *Social Service Review, 87*(1), 98-130.
- [Where to Get Care](#)
- [Choosing the mental health resource thats right for you](#)

SESSION 5

1.**Introduction and Expectations (15 minutes)**
   - Activity: Overview and Expectations: Briefly discuss what participants can expect from mental health interventions, including different approaches and formats, clients' rights, and the work involved.
   - Discussion: Setting the Stage: Address any immediate questions about mental health interventions.

2.**Becoming Aware of Different Mental Health Approaches (45 minutes)**
   - Lecture and Discussion (25 minutes): Different Mental Health Approaches: Explain the different modalities and what they entail, including what usually happens during therapeutic sessions. Describe the different areas of mental health interventions and support
   - Activity: Resource Exploration (20 minutes): Explore and map out local and online mental health support services using resource guides. Create a collaborative resource map on a large poster or digital platform.

3.**Choosing the Right Mental Health Support (20 minutes)**
   - Lecture and Discussion: Finding the Right Fit: Discuss factors to consider when seeking help, including qualifications, specialties, relevance, and personal comfort.
   - Activity: Self-Assessment Exercise: Participants will reflect on what they are looking for in a mental health expert and discuss their findings in small groups.

SESSION 5

Your Rights in Health/Mental Health Care (20 minutes)

- Lecture: Understanding Your Rights to Health and Mental Health: Review the rights individuals have during mental health access and utilization, including confidentiality, consent, and right to terminate intervention.
- Activity: Rights Scenarios: Discuss various scenarios where understanding and asserting one's rights might be necessary.

Reflection and Wrap-Up (20 minutes)

- Reflection Questions: Personal Takeaways: Discuss what participants have learned about the mental health care access, selection of therapist and what to expect based on therapeutic modalities.
- Discussion: Application and Next Steps: Share personal insights and strategies for applying the information in real-life situations. Review any final questions or concerns.

SESSION 5

ZINE DEVELOPMENT!

- Reflect on what you've learned about the mental health session process, your personal preferences in choosing a therapist, and any modalities you find appealing. Add a section to your Zine reflecting on the session's content. Include details on:
  - Mental health access and what it takes
  - Access: what to consider when reaching out to mental health services and therapists.
  - Health and mental health rights: Outline the key aspects of health/mental health care access and utilization.
  - Interaction with mental health professionals: Summarize steps you would take to have your mental health needs met during intervention (e.g., what goes into a therapeutic intervention).

SESSION 6

Wrap Up Session (Final Reflections)

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 6:
- Reflect on and share the learning journey
- Synthesize and showcase insights and sessions learned from Zine projects
- Identify ways to sustain and continue support and engagement.

Suggested Materials:
- Completed Zines
- Evaluation/Feedback Forms
- Food/Celebration!

Suggested Readings/Resources:
- Lazaridou, F., & Heinz, A. (2022). Perspective Chapter: Cultivating Environments of Belonging in Psychiatry, Clinical Psychology and the Allied Mental Health Fields. Effective Elimination of Structural Racism, 181-192.
- Daniel, B. J., & Jean-Pierre, J. (2020). Re-imagining child and youth care practice with African Canadian youth. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, *11*(2), 25-39.

Note: Encourage participants to think about long-term sustainability and how they can apply the insights gained from their Zine projects in their daily lives and future endeavours!

SESSION 6

1. **Zine Sharing** (30 minutes)
   - Activity: Participants will showcase their completed Zines, highlighting key insights and personal reflections gathered throughout the course.
   - Discussion: Engage in a group discussion about the themes and content presented in the Zines, encouraging feedback and celebrating the work done.

2. **Nurturing Support and Engagement** (15 minutes)
   - Lecture and Discussion: Explore strategies for continuing the support and engagement established during the sessions and Community of Practice (CoP). Discuss ways to maintain momentum and foster ongoing connections.

3. **Consolidation and Evaluation (**15 minutes)
   - Activity: Conduct a brief evaluation of the sessions, discussing what worked well and what could be improved. Participants will consolidate their learning and reflect on the overall experience (e.g., what changed in terms of mental health awareness and personal growth).

4.**Reflection and Future Planning: Celebrating Together** (60 minutes)

- Reflection Questions: Participants will answer questions about sustaining the initiatives and their plans for applying what they've learned. Focus on how to ensure that the support and engagement continue beyond the sessions
- Food/Conversation!

SECTION 4: LEADERSHIP SESSIONS

YOUTH LEADERSHIP SESSIONS

The leadership sessions build on the learning series on the mental health of Black Youth.

The leadership sessions are an opportunity for youth to continue to build and develop skills related to capacity building, knowledge development, empowerment, and action.

Through interactive activities and discussions, participants will explore their own leadership potential, strengthen their ability to navigate complex challenges, and build strategies to address mental health disparities within Black and racialized communities.

How can we lead the way in dismantling barriers to mental health care and create positive change for future generations?What makes a great leader? How can we continue to empower our communities as Black and racialized youth?

Some of the resources included in this section on leadership were adapted from the slides produced by Action Dignity on "Youth Leadership Training. YOUTH LEADING CHANGE"

LEADERSHIP TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Boost Leadership Skills

Systems Change

Connect

Collaborate for action

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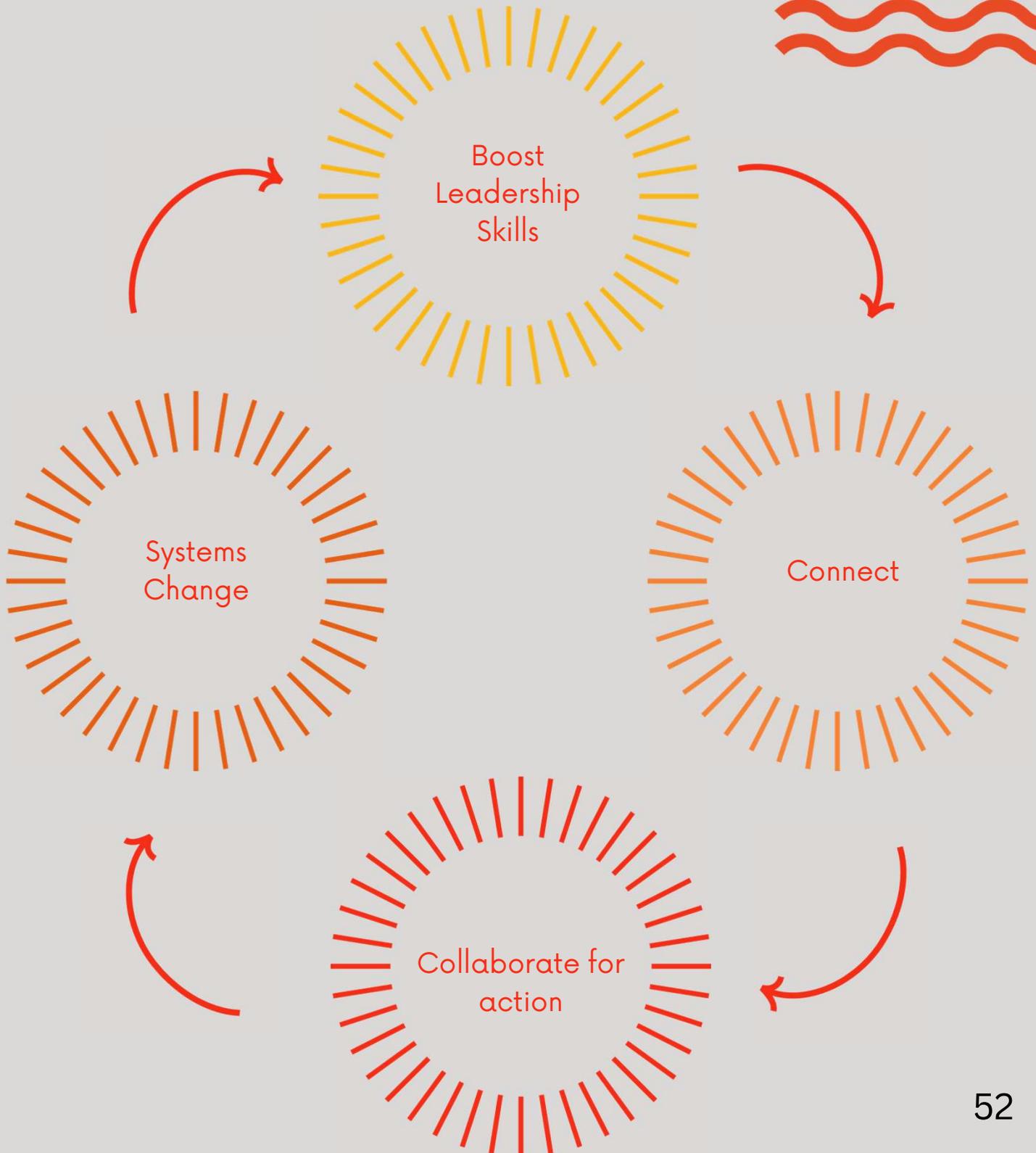
Introduction to system change and leadership

LEADERSHIP SESSION PLAN

OVERVIEW

2

Raising Critical Awareness about Mental Health in the Community

3

Tackling Policy and Practices

4

Synthesis and Evaluation
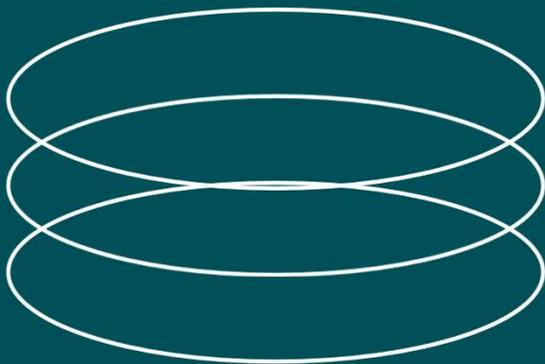
LEADERSHIP SESSION 1

Introduction to system change and leadership

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 1:
1. Develop an understanding of systems leadership
2. Identify how youth can be empowered to be leaders - how can youth become leaders?
3. Identify what makes a good leader
4. Recognize traits of a leader

Suggested Materials:
- Activity on system thinking
- Slide Decks
- Flipchart Paper: for system and its different parts
- Activity: Systems Leadership (Appendix A)

Suggested Resources/Handouts:
- AD Youth Leadership Slides

1.Introduction (15 minutes)
- Activity: "What's in a Name?"
- Participants share the story or significance behind their name and what it represents to them, creating a space for connection.
- Briefly introduce the leadership session focus: mental health leadership and systemic thinking.

2. Introduction to Systems Thinking (45 minutes)
- Activity: The Elephant (Appendix) (30 minutes)
  - Guide youth in presenting an image of an elephant.
    - What are each of the individuals thinking as they are interacting with the elephant?
    - Important to recognize that our own experience is rarely the whole truth.
- Explain the concept of Systems Thinking (15 minutes)
  - What is Systems Thinking?
  - Seeing the whole picture, recognizing interconnectedness, and understanding the relationships between different parts of a system.
- Introduce a basic example of a system (e.g., public health, education system).
- Application to Mental Health: Highlight how mental health issues are not isolated but interconnected with broader systems like healthcare, education, and societal structures.

3. Introduction to Systems Leadership (45 minutes)
- Activity (30 minutes)
  - Provide a handout on Systems Thinking and ask participants to:
    - Identify one systemic issue (e.g., racism, income inequality) (Appendix).
    - Describe how this issue impacts mental health at multiple levels (individual, family, community, societal).
    - Discuss strategies to address this systemic barrier at each level.
- Interactive Discussion (15 minutes)
  - Ask participants: What qualities do systems leaders need to address mental health barriers?
  - Discuss the skills and approaches that a systems leader must apply, such as collaboration, critical thinking, and the ability to influence change across systems.
  - Share examples of systems leaders in mental health advocacy (e.g., mental health advocates, policymakers, community leaders).

4.Reflections and Closing Remarks (15 minutes)
- Ask participants to take a few minutes to reflect on what they have learned:
  - What was the most important takeaway from today's session?
  - How will you apply systems thinking in your own work related to mental health?
- Participants can write down their reflections on a piece of paper or share with a partner.
- Summarize the key points discussed in the session.
- Encourage participants to continue thinking about how they can be systems leaders in addressing mental health barriers.
- Provide resources for further reading on systems thinking, mental health, and advocacy.

LEADERSHIP SESSION 2
Raising Critical Awareness about Mental Health in the Community

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 2:
1. Ability to recognize and name systemic barriers and issues
2. Identify community support systems for Black and racialized youth and evaluate their effectiveness in supporting mental health.
3. Develop an understanding of the intersection between mental health and systemic issues such as racism, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural stigma.

Suggested Materials:
- Whiteboard
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers (different colors)
- Sticky notes or index cards

Suggested Resources/Handouts:
- Slide deck
- Additional readings

1. **Understanding Mental Health within Community Contexts (30 minutes)**
   - Activity: "The Web of Support"
     - On a whiteboard or flip chart, create a diagram showing an individual at the center, surrounded by different layers of community support (family, friends, school, health services, cultural organizations).
     - As a group, brainstorm what support systems exist for Black and racialized youth, including both formal and informal systems.
   - Discussion:
     - How do these support systems help or hinder mental health?
     - What are the strengths and weaknesses of current community support networks for mental health in racialized communities?
     - What are the strengths among Black and racialized youth?

2. **Creating Connections Between Mental Health and Broader Systems (15 minutes)**
     - Activity: Exploring Connections
       - In small groups, ask participants to explore the intersection between mental health and systemic issues (e.g., how systemic racism affects access to mental health care).

3. **Introduction to Systemic Barriers (20 minutes)**
   - Presentation:
     - Define "systemic barriers" in the context of mental health.
     - Present statistics and data on the mental health disparities faced by Black and racialized youth.
     - Highlight the impact of racism, colonialism, socio-economic inequalities, and cultural stigma on mental health.
   - Discussion:
     - Ask participants: "What do these systemic barriers look like in your community?"
     - Encourage sharing of personal experiences, followed by a discussion on how these barriers manifest in daily life.

4.Identifying Systemic Barriers to Mental Health (40 minutes)
- Systemic Barriers to Mental Health
  - Use slides to discuss different types of systemic barriers that contribute to mental health issues, such as, Social Determinants of Health, Racism and Discrimination, Mental Health Stigma and Healthcare System Failures.
  - Use flipchart paper to visually represent these barriers and their impact on mental health.
  - Present examples and ask participants to contribute their own experiences or observations.
- Group Activity: Mapping the System
  - Divide participants into small groups and give them flipchart paper and markers.
  - Ask each group to create a visual diagram that represents how different systemic barriers (e.g., racism, poverty, stigma) impact mental health.
  - Encourage participants to think about connections between these factors (e.g., how racism in healthcare leads to poorer mental health outcomes).
  - Have each group present their diagram to the rest of the larger group.

5. Reflection (15 minutes)
- Reflection Questions:
  - What surprised you most during today's session?"
  - How do you think the systemic barriers we discussed relate to your community?"
  - What role can you play in overcoming these barriers?"
  - What small steps can we take to address these barriers in our communities?"
- Summarize key takeaways from the lesson.
- Highlight the importance of collective action in overcoming systemic barriers and improving mental health for Black and racialized youth.
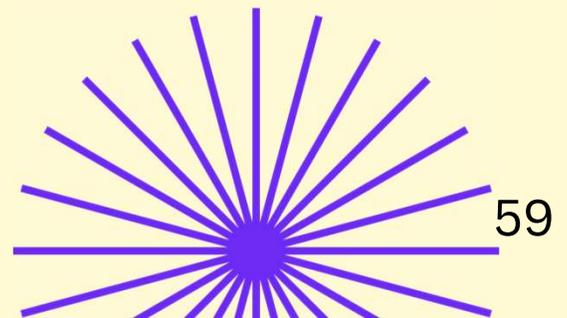
LEADERSHIP SESSION 3

Tackling Policy and Practices

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 3:
1. Identify key actionable initiatives that youth can undertake to create change
2. Ability to recognize and name problems Black and racialized communities face
3. Articulate relevant solutions

Suggested Materials:
- Flipchart Paper
- Sticky Notes

**Suggested Resources/Handouts:**
- [Problem and Solution Trees](#)

1. Introduction to Leadership in Problem-Solving (15 minutes)
- Set the context for how leadership connects to understanding and solving complex problems.
- Brief Discussion:
  - What does leadership mean to you?
  - How do leaders influence change in their communities?
    - Key ideas: Leadership is about inspiring, guiding, and empowering others to create positive change.
    - Explain that leadership involves identifying and naming problems, understanding their causes, and finding relevant solutions that benefit the whole community.
- Link to the Activity:
- Explain How the Problem Tree and Solution Tree Exercise Works
  - Allow leaders to identify, name, and analyze issues
  - Develop strategies for change.
  - Emphasize that leadership is essential in both identifying the root causes of problems and guiding others to develop and implement effective solutions.

2. Introduction to the Problem and Solution Trees (10 minutes)
- Introduce the Problem Tree:
  - A problem tree is a visual tool that helps individuals or groups analyze the causes and effects of a particular problem. It is like a "tree," where:
    - Roots represent the underlying causes of the problem.
    - Trunk represents the central problem itself.
    - Branches represent the effects or consequences of the problem.
- Introduce the Solution Tree:
  - A solution tree is the counterpart to the problem tree. It helps people think about potential solutions to address the problem. The structure is similar:
    - Roots represent the underlying solutions or interventions that address the causes of the problem.
    - Trunk represents the desired outcome or change.
    - Branches represent the actions or strategies needed to implement the solutions and its ripple o.
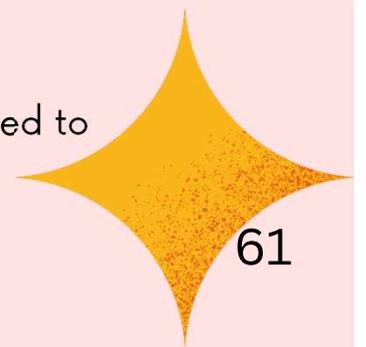
3. **Problem Tree Activity (35 minutes)**
   - Step 1: Define the Problem (5 minutes):
     - Ask participants to identify a specific problem that they want to address. For example, they may choose to focus on mental health barriers for Black and racialized youth.
     - Guiding Question: What is the central problem or challenge that youth face in accessing mental health support in your community?
   - Step 2: Identify Causes (15 minutes):
     - On a large piece of paper (or whiteboard), draw a tree with a trunk in the center labeled "Problem."
     - Ask the group to think about the root causes of the problem. These are the underlying factors or systemic issues that contribute to the problem.
     - Examples: Lack of culturally competent mental health professionals, stigma around mental health in Black and racialized communities, poverty, racial discrimination in healthcare, etc.
     - Write each root cause on a sticky note or card and place it at the roots of the tree.
   - Step 3: Identify Effects (15 minutes):
     - Ask participants to think about the effects or consequences of the problem. These are the negative impacts that the central problem has on individuals, families, or communities.
     - Examples: Increased rates of anxiety and depression, social isolation, lack of academic success, difficulty accessing and maintaining stable employment, etc.
     - Write each effect on a sticky note or card and place it as branches extending from the trunk of the tree.
   - Group Discussion:
     - Once the tree is complete, facilitate a group discussion:
       - What surprised you about the causes and effects of this problem?
       - Are there any causes or effects that you did not consider before?
       - How are these causes interconnected?

4. Solution Tree Activity (35 minutes)

- Step 1: Define the Desired Outcome (5 minutes):
  - Ask the group to think about what they would like to achieve by addressing the central problem. This is the trunk of the solution tree.
    - What change would you like to see if this problem were solved? Example: "Increased access to mental health services for Black and racialized youth" or "Reduction in mental health stigma in our community."
- Step 2: Identify Solutions (15 minutes):
  - Draw a second tree (on a new piece of paper or board) with a trunk labeled by the desired outcome.
  - Now, ask participants to identify solutions or interventions that could address the root causes of the problem.
  - Examples:
    - Training for healthcare professionals in anti-racist practice.
    - Community-based mental health programs designed for Black and racialized youth.
    - Anti-stigma campaigns in schools and community centers.
    - Policy changes to increase funding for mental health services in marginalized communities.
  - Write each solution on a sticky note and place it at the roots of the tree.
- Step 3: Identify Actions or Strategies (15 minutes):
  - Ask participants to brainstorm actions or strategies that can be taken to implement the solutions identified in the previous step. These will be the branches of the tree.
  - Examples:
    - Organizing community workshops on mental health.
    - Lobbying for policy changes to secure funding for mental health programs.
    - Developing peer-to-peer support networks for youth.
    - Partnering with local schools to provide mental health education and resources.
  - Write each action or strategy on a sticky note and place it on the branches of the tree.

5. Group Discussion (10 minutes)

- Once the solution tree is complete, facilitate a discussion:
  - Which solutions do you think will have the greatest impact on the problem?
  - What challenges might we face when trying to implement these solutions?
  - How can we prioritize which solutions to focus on?

6. Reflection and Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

- Ask participants to reflect on the following:
  - What did you learn about the relationship between the causes and effects of this problem?
  - What solutions or actions do you feel most excited about pursuing in your community?
  - How can we start taking small steps to address this problem, even today?
- Emphasize the importance of understanding both the root causes and potential solutions when working towards systemic change. Remind participants that tackling big problems requires a holistic approach and that every small action contributes to a larger change.
- Encourage the group to continue thinking about ways they can contribute to solving the problem in their community, whether through individual action or collective efforts.
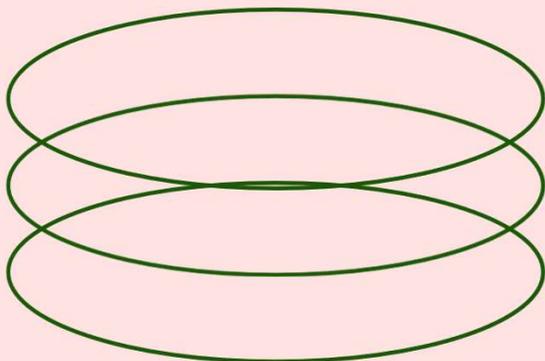
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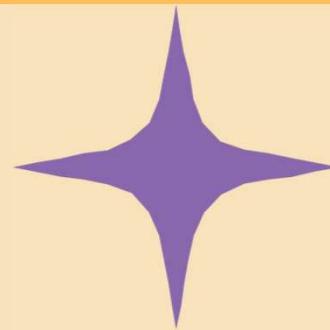
Synthesis and Evaluation (Actioning Change)

(Time: 120 Minutes)

LESSON PLAN:

Learning Outcomes of Session 4:
- Critically analyze, understand, and apply insights related to themselves, youth, and communities as interconnected support systems.
- Co-develop an action plan to overcome systemic barriers to mental health
- Understand how actionable and sustaible change can be created.

Suggested Materials:
- Slide Decks
- Flipchart Paper
- Sticky Notes

Suggested Resources/Handouts:
- [Youth Policy Review](#)
- [How Young People Influence Policy](#)
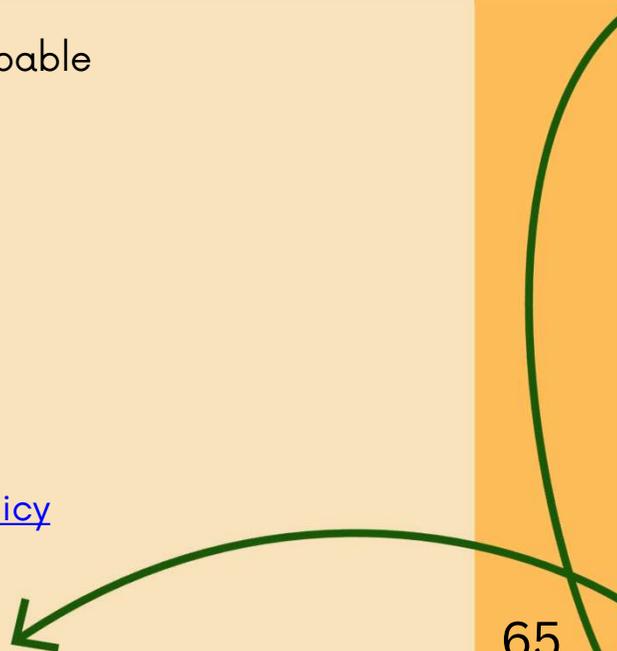
1. Introduction to Policy Critique (15 minutes)
- Presentation:
    - Start by briefly explaining the role of policies in shaping systems.
    - Discuss why it's important to understand and critique policies—particularly for marginalized communities like Black and racialized youth.
    - Explain that the focus will be on reviewing existing policies related to mental health, education, or healthcare—areas that heavily impact youth.
- Guiding Questions:
    - Why do you think it's important to critique policies that affect your life?
    - How might critiquing and changing policies help create a fairer, more supportive environment?"

2. Selecting and Introducing Policies (15 minutes)
- Introduce the Policies:
    - Present two specific policies or recommendations related to mental health or community wellbeing that are relevant to the group. Some examples include:
        - [Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council Recommendations](#)
        - [The Mental Health Strategy for Canada: A Youth Perspective](#)
        - [We journey together: How Ontario's child and youth mental health agencies are addressing racial equity](#)
        - [The City of Calgary: Anti Racism Strategic Plan](#)
    - Provide a brief overview of the policies' objectives and scope.
    - Explain the intent behind these policies, who they affect, and what their potential impact is on youth in the community.
    - If the policy is dense or technical, highlight the key sections and provide a simplified summary.

3. Policy Review and Critique (30 minutes)

- Small Group Work (15 minutes):
  - Divide participants into small groups (3-4 people per group). Give each group a copy of one policy (or policy excerpt).
  - Instructions for Critiquing:
    - Identify Key Areas: Focus on the two most significant issues or provisions in the policy that relate to mental health or Black and racialized youth. These might be areas where the policy is strong or where it's failing to address important issues.
    - Critique the Policy: Consider the following questions:
      - Does the policy address the needs of Black and racialized youth? Why or why not?
      - Are there any gaps in the policy? What's missing or unclear?
      - Who benefits from this policy? Who is disadvantaged or left out?
      - Does the policy promote equity, or does it reinforce existing disparities?
    - Write your Critique: Using sticky notes, have groups write down their critiques—both strengths and weaknesses of the policy. Place these on a flipchart or large paper.
- Large Group Sharing (15 minutes):
  - After the small group discussions, bring everyone back together.
  - Ask each group to present their critique to the larger group, sharing:
    - The policy they reviewed.
    - Their critique of how well the policy serves the community and addresses mental health and equity issues.
    - Suggested changes or improvements.
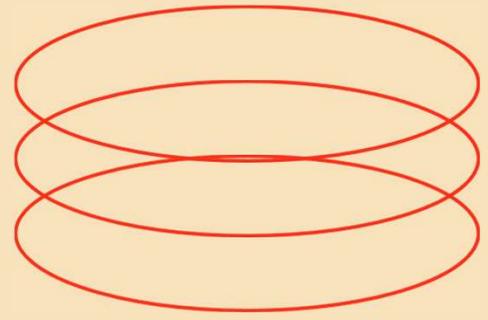
4. Activity: Connecting the Dots (30 Minutes):
- Group Reflection Circle (15 minutes):
  - Gather all participants in a circle to create a safe and open environment for sharing.
  - Prompt the group to reflect on their overall experience, using the following guiding questions:
  - Guiding Reflection Questions:
    - What new insights did you gain about the connection between mental health and systemic barriers?
    - What role do you see yourself playing in advocating for mental health equity within your community?
    - What is one systemic barrier you feel is the most urgent to address in your community, and why?
  - Encourage participants to respond briefly but thoughtfully. If comfortable, participants can share any personal experiences or examples that relate to the questions.
- Individual Reflection (10 minutes):
  - After the group circle, ask participants to take a few minutes to write down their personal reflections. Provide them with a set of reflective prompts:
  - Reflection Prompts:
    - How do you see the different systems (family, school, healthcare, cultural organizations) around you influencing mental health outcomes for Black and racialized youth?
    - What actionable steps can you take—either individually or as part of a larger group—to challenge or dismantle the systemic barriers?
    - What are some ways you can strengthen or create support systems within your community to promote mental health for Black and racialized youth?
  - Optional: If participants are comfortable, you can ask them to share one of their written reflections with the group.

5. Action Plan (25 minutes):

- Activity: Have participants transition from reflection to action by creating a Personal Action Plan on how they can address or challenge the systemic barriers to mental health they discussed. Provide them with a template or structure to guide their planning.
- Action Plan Template:
  - Identify the barrier you want to address as it relates to mental health (e.g., racism in healthcare, stigma around mental health, lack of community support).
  - What is one specific action you can take to challenge or reduce this barrier?
  - (For example: Raise awareness about mental health stigma through social media, organize a community event to share resources on mental health, create a peer support group).
  - Who are the stakeholders or community members you need to involve in this action? (such as, youth groups, healthcare providers, teachers, local organizations).
  - Timeline: What is a realistic timeframe to begin taking action on this plan? (Short-term vs. long-term goals).
  - Resources: What resources or support do you need to make this action happen? (e.g., mentorship, funding, materials, community partnerships).

5. Closing Reflection (5 minutes):

- Once the action plans are complete, invite participants to share their action plans with a partner or the group, highlighting the most important step they plan to take in the coming weeks.
- Closing Question: How can you stay motivated and accountable in your efforts to challenge systemic barriers to mental health?

Remind participants that they are not alone in their efforts. Reinforce the importance of collective action and encourage participants to continue learning and advocating for mental health equity in their communities.

SECTION 5:
CUE CARDS

Session 1

SESSION OBJECTIVES
- Getting to know one another
- Explain ActionDignity Leadership Framework
- Introduce what this learning journey will look like (learning sessions + relfection sessions)

TAKEAWAY

As we embark on this learning journey, reflect on ways we can build confidence, empower voices, and strengthen community around mental health throughout this journey.

REFLECT

What are some ways that we can learn better together as a group?

Create a set of group guidelines together!

INTRODUCTION

SESSION OBJECTIVES
- Identify systemic barriers: Explore and understand the systemic challenges that racialized youth face in accessing appropriate mental health services.
- Amplify voices and awareness
- Discuss strategies for challenging existing programs and effectively navigating systemic issues in mental health

REFLECT

What challenges have you seen in the mental health system for Black and racialized youth, and how can we work together to address them?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Recognizing the challenges Black and racialized youth face in the mental health system is the first step to pushing for real changes and better access to services.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE SYSTEM

Session 2

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Identify communities to which youth belong.
- The impacts of family and community on the sense of belonging and mental health
- Barriers and enablers from these relationships towards mental health

REFLECT

What steps can we take to foster a sense of belonging and enrich our relationships within our families and communities for better mental health?

TAKEAWAY

Building a sense of belonging in our relationships enhances personal well-being, strengthens community connections, and empowers Black and racialized youth to support one another in overcoming life challenges, including mental health issues.

BELONGING

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Recognize signs and symptoms of mental health issues and disorders
- Explore existing and potential support systems
- Reflect on personal experiences of access

REFLECT

What signs of needing mental help have you seen in yourself or others, and how can we support each other better?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Shifting the language, and noticing the signs.

- Recognizing your own mental health signs and symptoms is crucial for seeking the help you need.
- Improved understanding and sharing experiences of mental health can empower Black racialized youth to support each other in navigating the mental health care system.
- Building a network of safe spaces and supportive individuals fosters a stronger, more resilient community for everyone's mental health.

WHEN DO YOU KNOW?

Session 5
MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Understanding mental health access and utilization
- Exploring therapeutic modalities
- Choosing the right mental health intervention and professionals
- Your rights in mental health care

TAKEAWAY

- Familiarity with mental health approaches and key features enhances your confidence in seeking and accessing therapeutic support.
- Awareness of your rights in mental health care fosters empowerment and a sense of safety.
- Understanding what is expected in a mental health intervention enriches mental health care and support.

REFLECT

Think about your experiences with mental health care. How could learning about the different approaches and finding the right intervention empower you on your journey to mental wellness?

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Reflect on the learning journey
- Share insights from Zine projects
- Discuss strategies for sustaining support and engagement

REFLECT

What is next - how can we make sure that this is sustainable?

KEY TAKEAWAY

It is in our hopes that this learning journey empowered you to recognize mental health challenges in your personal life and your areas of influence, cultivate supportive relationships, and engage in collective advocacy for improved access to existing resources. It is important to foster a sense of belonging and mental health wellness within self, families and communities. Ultimately, it is also our hope that you feel equipped to be a community leader in mental health wellness.

WRAP UP SESSION

Session 6

SECTION 6: APPENDIX RESOURCES

LESSON 1 ACTIVITY:
Introduction to Systems Thinking and Applying It to Mental Health
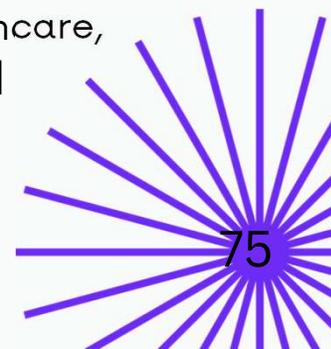
What is Systems Thinking?

Systems thinking is a way of understanding the world by recognizing how different parts of a system are interconnected. Instead of focusing on individual issues, systems thinking helps us see the whole picture, including how changes in one part of a system can impact other parts.

Key Principles of Systems Thinking:
    a. Interconnectedness: Every part of a system affects and is affected by others.
    b. Feedback Loops: Systems have cycles where cause and effect influence each other.
    c. Causality: Understanding root causes instead of just symptoms.
    d. Emergence: The system as a whole creates outcomes that are different from individual parts.

Systems Thinking and Mental Health

When we apply systems thinking to mental health, we can better understand how social, economic, and cultural factors affect mental health on various levels. This approach helps us look at the larger, interconnected systems (e.g., healthcare, education, discrimination) that impact individuals and communities.

Analyzing a Systemic Issue and Its Impact on Mental Health:

Systems thinking helps us understand how social, economic, and cultural factors impact mental health on individual, family, community, and societal levels.

Identify One Systemic Issue. Choose One Issue:

Racism   Income Equality   Healthcare Access

Now Think!

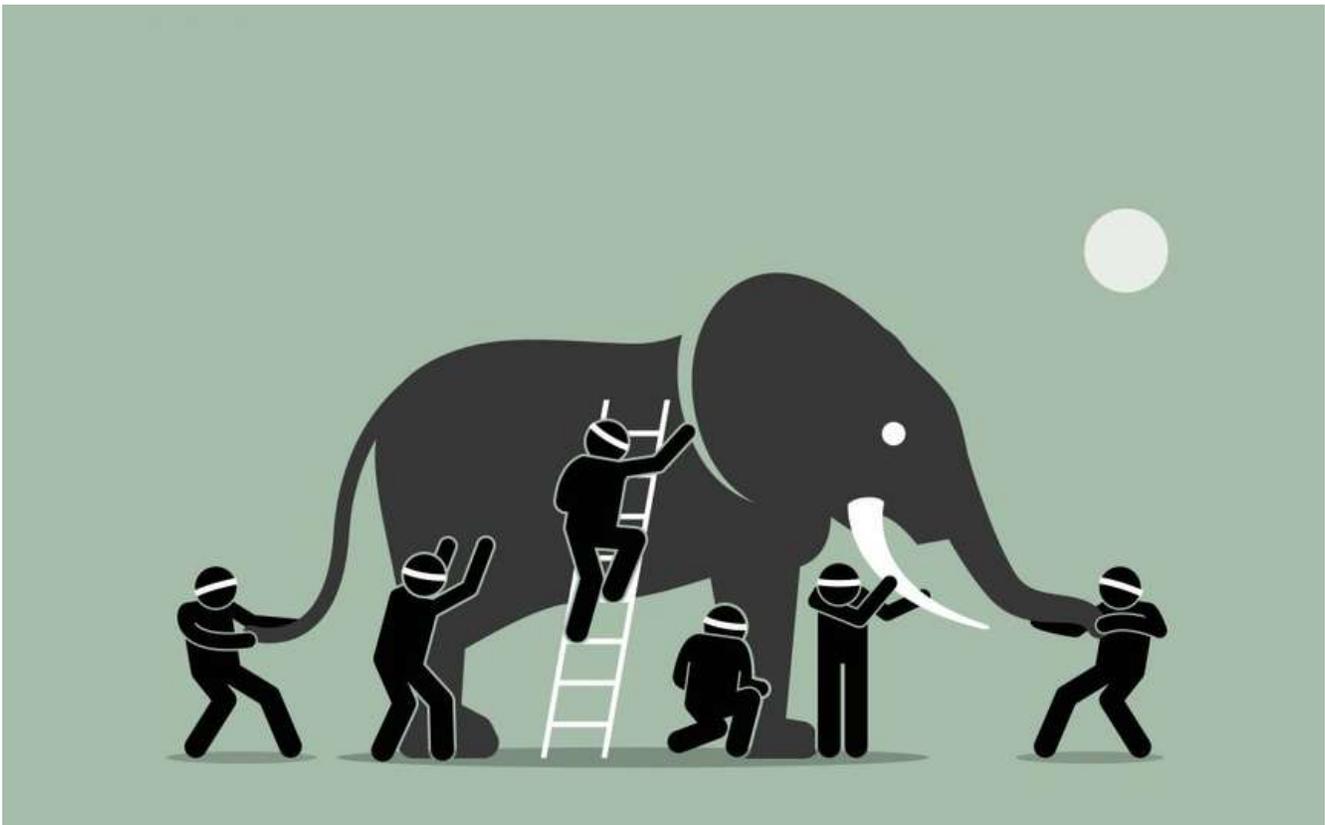| Systems	Impact on MH	Strategies to Address the Issue
Individual	*Consider. How does this issue affect personal mental health?*	*Consider. What actions can an individual take?*
Family	*Consider:How does it affect family dynamics*	*Consider:How can families provide support?*
Community	*Consider. What impact does it have on community wellbeing?*	*Consider. What community actions can be taken?*
Society	*Consider. What are the broader societal effects?*	*Consider. What policy changes or societal shifts are needed?*

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LESSON 2 ACTIVITY:
THE ELEPHANT
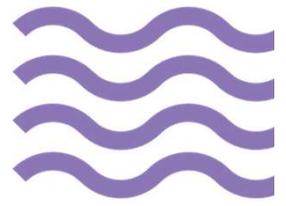
Story:
Present the classic story of the Blind Men and the Elephant:
The Story: A group of blind men, each touching a different part of an elephant (the trunk, tusks, tail, ear, etc.), are asked to describe what the elephant looks like. Since they each only touch one part of the animal, they each describe something different—one says it's like a snake (the trunk), another says it's like a spear (the tusk), another says it's like a rope (the tail), and so on. They argue about the nature of the elephant because they have only one part of the information.

Message: The story highlights that each perspective is valid in its own right, but no single perspective can fully capture the complexity of the whole system. The key is to combine these individual perspectives to get a complete understanding.

Introduce Systems Thinking:
- Explain how systems thinking can be used to make sense of complex problems where different parts influence each other.
- Emphasize that the elephant represents a larger, interconnected system. By only focusing on one part of the system, you might miss how it connects to and affects the other parts.

leremy. (n.d.). Six blind men touching an elephant. Vector illustrations depict six blindfolded people with different perceptions, impressions, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and interpretation towards an ... See More. Adobe Stock. Retrieved from https://stock.adobe.com/ca/images/six-blind-men-touching-an-elephant-vector-illustrations-depict-six-blindfolded-people-with-different-perceptions-impressions-ideas-opinions-beliefs-and-interpretation-towards-an-elephant/415738042?prev_url=detail.

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