UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL TRAUMA, GRIEF & MOURNING EXPERIENCED BY AFRICAN AMERICANS

DR. DWAYNE BUCKINGHAM
The E.R. Doctor
CEO, R.E.A.L. Horizons Consulting Solutions, LLC
Tune Out Distractions

Ask Questions

Keep an Open Mind

Take Action
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Furthermore, the presenter is **not serving in the capacity of a psychotherapist**. This is training, not a substitute for seeking professional counseling or guidance. Therefore, the presenter is not liable or responsible for any emotions that surface or actions that you take regarding the topic.

Lastly, we will be viewing disturbing images and discussing emotional content so please consider seeking help if warranted.
Who Am I?

- President and CEO, R.E.A.L Horizons Consulting Solutions, LLC
- President, The Empathy and Resilience Center, Inc. 501 (3) (c)
- Veteran, USAF
- Licensed Clinical Social worker with over 20 years of experience
- Psychotherapist to over 30,000 clients from around the world
- Author x 11
- Filmmaker x 4
- Father
- Husband
- Empathy and Resilience expert
- I AM A BLACK MAN IN AMERICA
What You’ll Learn…

- Why So Many African Americans Are Struggling to Breathe?
- American history and Black history in America
- Gain a Deeper Understanding of African American’s history of trauma in America through systematic racism
- How to differentiate grieving and mourning among African Americans
- 5 strategies you can use to help African Americans cope with their justifiable anger and prolonged psychological trauma
Have you ever WONDERED?

What It is Like to **Breathe** Freedom

What It is Like to **Breathe** Justice

What It is Like to **Breathe** because Black Lives Matter!
Millions of African Americans are struggling.
WHY ARE SO MANY AFRICAN AMERICANS STRUGGLING TO BREATHE?
Are African Americans Struggling to Breathe due to the Senseless Murder of George Floyd?

George could not breathe for 8 minutes and 46 Seconds. He died face down on a dirty city street.
YES, BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE

Let me tell you a little about African Americans' history of trauma in America...
American History

"Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"

African American History

"Live, Legacy and the pursuit of Justice"
Our History, Culture and Identity in America is Rooted in Trauma

This is **WHY** so many African Americans are struggling to **Breathe**!
What Is Trauma?

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Trauma intersects in different ways with culture, history, race, gender, location and language.
Psychological Effect of Trauma

- Flashbacks or frequent nightmares
- Always expecting something bad to happen
- Not remembering periods of life
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Unable to concentrate
- Excessive watchfulness, anxiety, anger, shame or sadness

None of these signs is always associated with trauma.

Each behavior can play a role in protecting people or helping them survive. It’s not what’s wrong with you, but what happened to you.
At the early age of 6-years-old, I began to ask myself two fundamental questions:

- I was born into poverty
- Raised by my single mother in the ghetto
- Was shot in the arm – age 8
- Saw my first dead body at age 10
- My mother passed from cancer when I was age 17
- I was robbed at gun point at age 19
- I attended my 17-year nephew’s funeral at age 21
- I attended one of best friend’s funeral at age 24
- I learned to grieve by keeping it all in.

I also learned that my hardship and despair was rooted in Cultural Trauma
When members of a collective group have been subjected to horrendous events that leaves indelible marks on their consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

What Is Cultural Trauma?

- 19th Century lynching
- Modern-day lynching
  - Michael Brown
4 Factors That Influence How Trauma Affects Us

- How
- When
- Where
- How Often

16th Street Baptist Church – September 15, 1963

Charleston Church Shooting – June 2015
4 Factors That Influence How Trauma Affects Us

- How
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Slavery was institutionalized oppression – a formal system designed to subordinate a certain group of people by unjust use of force, authority or societal norms.

A social-economic system under which certain persons-known as slaves are deprived of personal freedom and are forced to work. Individuals are treated as property.
Developed a Full Proof Method to Control Slaves for at least 300 hundred years (after receiving this indoctrination will they self-refuel and self-generate for hundreds of years, maybe Thousands)

- Make differences and make them bigger
  - Use Fear, Distrust and Envy for control purposes
- Age – pitch old males against young males (vice versus)
- Color – pitch dark skin against light skin (vice versus)
- Gender – use females against males (vice versus)
- Make sure all slaves trust and depend on whites
- Make sure that they love, respect and trust whites only
- Use the method intensely for one year and they will maintain it
Six Cardinal Principles for Making a Negro

- Both horse and niggers are no good to the economy in the wild or natural state
- Both must be broken and tied together for orderly production
- For orderly future, special and particular attention must be paid to the female and the youngest offspring
- Both must be crossbred to produce variety and division of labor
- Both must be taught to respond to a peculiar new language
- Psychological and physical instruction of Containment must be created for both
Methods for Making a Negro

- Keep the body, Take the Mind (break his will to resist)
- Keep eyes and thoughts on the female and Offspring of the nigger
- Concentrate on future generations
- **Break the female mother and she will break her offspring**
- Break and train the female so she will eat out of your hand
- Take the meanest and most restless nigger, strip him of his clothes **in front** of other male niggers, the female, and the nigger offspring and **beat the fear of God in him**
Run a series of test on her (she is most the important factor for good economics) use the bullwhip if she shows any signs of resistance and extract that last bit of {b----} out of her.

When in complete submission she will train her offspring

In her natural state she would have a strong dependency on the uncivilized nigger male

Break her dependency and need for the nigger male by burning and pulling a civilized nigger apart and bullwhipping the other to the point of death, all in her presence.
CULTURAL TRAUMA

Breaking the Black Woman

- By her being left alone, unprotected, with the Male Image Destroyed, the ordeal caused her to move from her psychologically dependent state to a frozen, independent state.

- In this frozen, psychological state of independence, she will raise her Male and female offspring in reversed roles. For fear of the young male’s life, she will psychologically train him to be mentally weak and dependent, but Physically Strong.

- Because she has become psychologically independent, she will train her Female offspring to be psychologically independent.

- **Ultimate Goal: Woman out front** and the nigger Man behind and Scared. Before breaking you had to be on alert, but know the woman stands guard.
The Negro Marriage

- Breed two nigger males with two nigger females and then take the nigger male away from them and keep them moving and working.
- Being without the influence of the nigger male and frozen in an independent psychological state – she will raise your offspring into reverse positions.
- The one with the female offspring will teach her to be like her (independent and negotiable) and the one with the male offspring will raise him to be mentally dependent and weak, but physically strong; in other words, body over mind.
- When the offspring are ready for reproduction they will mate and breed, thus continue the cycle. That is good, sound and long range comprehensive planning.
Sustainability and Warnings

- Prevent them from accessing original historical information about their natural state because the mind has a strong drive to correct and re-correct itself over a period of time if it can touch some substantial original historical base

- Shave off the brute’s mental history and create a multiplicity of phenomena of illusions, so that each illusion will twirl in its own orbit (For example, crossbreed the nigger in order to create a diversified division of labor)

- Create different levels of labor and different values of illusion at each connecting level of labor
Summary of Slave Making Methods

- Break and tie them together for orderly production
- Pay particular attention to the female savage and her offspring for orderly future planning
- Reverse the positions/roles of the male and female savages
- Create an orbiting cycle that turns on its own axis forever
The 13th amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States, passed the Senate on April 8, 1864, and the House on January 31, 1865. On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures.

Life after slavery for African Americans was similar to undergoing major surgery without any anesthesia.

A bad seed called oppression was planted in the psyche of Black people and blossomed without appropriate care or intervention.

Additionally, laws were established to set the stage for continued oppression.
Jim Crow Era – state and local laws enacted in the Southern and border states of US between 1876 and 1965. Racism was worse during this time. They mandated *de jure segregation* in all public facilities, with a supposedly “separate but equal” status for Black Americans. Jim Crow Laws led to treatment and accommodations that were inferior to those provided for white Americans, systematizing a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages.
Civil Rights Era – Emett Till – a 14-year-old black boy from Chicago, was murdered on August 28, 1955 for whistling at a white woman while visiting relatives in Mississippi. His body was thrown in the Tallahatchie River and his murders were acquitted.
Civil Rights Era – March 7, 1965 was named “Bloody Sunday” when blacks were attacked while peacefully marching from Selma to Montgomery.
Civil Rights Leader – Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968 after delivering his famous “Mountaintop sermon.” Riots broke out in more than 110 cities across the U.S. The damage done in many cities destroyed black businesses.
1. Rodney King - 1991
2. Sean Bell – 2006
3. Oscar Grant III - 2009
4. Trayvon Martin – 2012
5. Jonathan Ferrell - 2013
7. John Crawford - 2014
9. Laquan McDonald - 2014
10. Ezell Ford - 2014
12. Michelle Shirley - 2016
14. Botham Jean – 2018
15. Stephon Clark – 2018
16. Ahmaud Arbery - 2020
17. Breonna Taylor – 2020
18. George Floyd – 2020
WHY ARE SO MANY AFRICAN AMERICANS STRUGGLING TO BREATHE?
African Americans have been **Grieving** since slavery.

**Grieving**

The internal meaning given to the experience of loss.

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African Americans have been **Mourning** since the Jim Crow Era, Civil Rights Era, Early and late 90s and **EVEN** now!

**Mourning**

The outward expression of grief or the public face of grief.
What Are Symptoms of Grief?

- Grief is an emotional reaction/response to loss.

- Emotional states of grief include:
  - Shock
  - Confusion
  - Denial
  - Anger
  - Sadness
  - Rage
  - Depression
  - Isolation
The Five Stages of Grief

- Denial – shock and disbelief
- Bargaining - guilt and pleading
- Anger - frustrated and helpless (why questions)
- Depression – pain and reflection (feeling of loneliness)
- Acceptance - acknowledgment and acceptance of loss
What Are Symptoms of Mourning?

- Persistent **anger and hostility** leading to paranoid reactions, especially against those involved in the decease’s death, or suppression of any expression of anger and hostility
- Persistence of denial with delayed or absent grieving
- Depression with impaired self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and impulses with self-destructive behavior.
- Actual organic disease and medical illness
- Progressive social isolation
- Disruption of normal patterns of conduct, often with a persistent hyperactivity unaccompanied by a sense of loss or grieving
- Protest
What Happens When People Experience Prolonged Grieving and Mourning?

Their coping resources become overwhelmed, which often leads them to find ways of coping that may work in the short run, but may cause serious harm in the long run.

Causes physical, emotional, spiritual or psychological harm and seriously disrupts the functioning of individuals, communities and creates a Crisis due to great damage and/or loss of life.

Behind every behavior there is an emotion. If people can’t let go, they can’t move on.
Which Emotion Contributes to Increased \textit{Hostility} During Both The Grieving and Mourning Phases?
Which Emotion Creates feelings of *Hostility* During Grieving and Mourning Phases?

Typically, one of the primary *emotions*, like *fear* or *sadness*, can be found underneath the *anger*.
What Happens in the *Brain* when anger Is Present?

Emotional hijacking

![Diagram showing the brain with the higher cortex and amygdala](Image)

**LOW Emotion**
*Calm, Relaxed*

**HIGH Emotion**
*(Anger, Fear, Excitement, Love, Hate, Disgust, Frustration)*
No Psychological Intervention, No Peace!

- Grief
- Mourning
- Anger
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Internalized Oppression
- Depression

To live life is a constant state of grief and mourning that is rooted in trauma is as harsh as living life without a soul.
What Strategies Can I Use To Help African Americans Cope Effectively with Anger and Prolonged Psychological Trauma?
5 STRATEGIES

Strategy 1 – Enhance Your Emotional Intelligence

Strategy 2 – E.A.T. First

Strategy 3 – Practice Empathic Responding

Strategy 4 – Seek Additional Sensitivity Training

Strategy 5 – Take a Risk
ENHANCE YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict.

If you have a high emotional intelligence you are able to recognize your own emotional state and the emotional states of others and engage with people in a way that draws them to you.

You can use this understanding of emotions to relate better to other people, form healthier relationships, achieve greater success at work, and lead a more fulfilling life.
What Is Emotional Intelligence?

The four domains of emotional intelligence model are based upon a connection between what you see and what you do with yourself and others.
Examine yourself – What are you feeling and thinking?

Self-awareness
The ability to know one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals and recognize their impact on others while using gut feelings to guide decisions.

Alter negative Emotions - What good can come from being negative?

Self-regulation
Involves controlling or redirecting one's disruptive emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.

Think about the Golden and Platinum Rule – How would I like to be treated? What does the person need?

Social Awareness and Relationship Management
Managing relationships to move people in the desired direction
Empathic Responding Defined

The ability to connect with others by responding in a manner that communicates “I understand and can relate to your distress.”
The 5 Empathic Responding Model

S - Seek to understand emotional distress (do not give instructions – just listen)

T – Think about the Platinum Rule (prompts you to think about others’ needs)

E - Engage in two-way dialogue (ask open ended questions to encourage others to talk)

P - Paraphrase (repeat what you heard for clarification purposes and understanding)

P - Provide validation and guidance (connect and help others identify solutions and resources)

Take a S.T.E.P.P. in the right direction and show compassion!
5 S.T.E.P.P Empathic Responding Framework

Seek - Please tell me more about the situation.

Think – What does the person need?

Engage - Ask open-ended questions leading with “What, How or Who?” For example, “What other factors are contributing to your feeling of being overwhelmed?”

Paraphrase – So I heard you say, “

Provide - validation and guidance (If I were in your shoes I would probably feel, “Overwhelmed”)……Now lets talk about solutions and the way forward
STRATEGY 4

SEEK ADDITIONAL SENSIVITY TRAINING
We specialize in providing training and consultation to social workers and counselors who serve vulnerable populations such as African Americans, service members, veterans and women.

We offer live webinars and on-demand CEU courses specifically focusing on vulnerable populations.

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STRATEGY 5

TAKE A RISK
We might not be able to remove all of the obstacles that are negatively affecting this country, especially not overnight, but we can begin to work on our emotional and mental wellbeing. This is critically important because a person filled with hopelessness and helplessness sees no way forward.

- Take a risk and speak up!
- Take a risk and get counseling if have underlying biases!
- Take a risk and hold people accountable!
- Take a risk and change what you do not like when you look in the mirror!
- Take a risk and work to change A NATION THAT IS DIVIDED BY INJUSTICE AND RACISM.

"He who is not courageous enough to take risk will accomplish nothing in life.”

-Muhammad Ali
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Resilient people find solutions in problems. In contrast, troubled people find problems in every solution.

I’ve also learned that how you treat yourself will show up in how you treat others. Your emotional and social growth depends on your ability to see within side yourself and change you.

You do not need to permission to treat people with compassion so stop waiting on others to authorize your humanity and kindness.

Give the gift of empathy and see what you get back

The only time giving is bad, is when you are giving up.

I’ve learned that hate and social injustice can destroy a nation. But I’ve also learned that love and equality for all can build a nation where every human being can breathe and pursue life, liberty and the pursue of happiness.
Questions
THANK YOU, LET’S CONNECT!

R.E.A.L. Horizons Consulting Solutions, LLC
8101 Sandy Spring, Rd, Suite 250
Laurel, MD 20707

240-280-1008

dwayne@realhorizonsdlb.com

www.realhorizonsdlb.com
Thanks!!
dwayne@realhorizonsdlb.com
Voice mail: 240-280-1008