

Grady Nia Project

Office phone#: (404) 616-2897

<http://psychiatry.emory.edu/programsniaproject.htm>



We are pleased to bring you, from the Grady Nia Project, issue five of the *Nia Newsletter*, intended to be a source of information, inspiration, and support for women who have battled with domestic violence and suicidality. Our cover today features a review of the book, *Lay My Burden Down: Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis among African Americans*. If

you have a review, story, or poem that you would like to share with the Nia community, please let us know. Personal stories help other women feel that they are not alone. Please submit stories to the Director of the Nia project Dr. Nadine J. Kaslow at nkaslow@emory.edu.

A Book Review

Lay My Burden Down: Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis among African Americans

By Alvin F. Poussaint, M.D. and Amy Alexander

From 1980 to 1995 suicides among black youth increased 114%. This book by a Harvard Psychiatrist and a Journalist (both of whom lost relatives to suicide) explores cultural and societal reasons to explain the increasing mental health problems among African Americans.

Poussaint, a professor psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and Alexander, a journalist and editor, both lost younger brothers to suicide. In this book, the authors use their own and other families' stories to explore how depression, despair, and hopelessness have impacted Black individuals. Additionally, the authors also use statistics to convey the enormity of mental health problems in the African American community.

The book explores social, cultural, and historical factors that hinder mental health care in African Americans. For example, because of poor or perhaps cruel treatment of African Americans by the medical establishment, many African Americans refrain from seeking healthcare for themselves and their family members. Also, many people might assume that poverty causes or contributes to suicide in African Americans; however, the authors point out that many educated, successful African Americans

commit suicide due to the stress of working in a White workplace.

Lay My Burden Down concludes with a prescription that society can use to reduce the number of African American suicides. Among the authors' recommendations are making mental health care more accessible to African Americans, informing African Americans about mental health and its treatment through educational programs and the media, training mental health workers to eliminate racist stereotyping and to promote culturally competent care, demanding that insurance companies cover mental health treatment, and continuing to fight racism that contributes to stress in the lives of African Americans.

Overall, *Lay My Burden Down* is an excellent book for consumers and clinicians who are hoping to better understand the complex picture of mental illness in the African American community. —Review by Amy Leiner, Ph.D.

Medical News Alert: Meditation Reduces Stress and Increases Heart Health in African Americans

Medical Researchers have found that a certain stress-reduction technique, Transcendental Meditation, has been successful in reducing stress among African Americans. Not only does this specific kind of meditation help individuals to relax, it also decreases three risk factors for heart disease in African Americans: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

This is very exciting news for two reasons. First, African Americans are more at risk for heart disease than any other major ethnic group in the United States. Second, African Americans are underrepresented in many medical research trials. Therefore, finding a relaxation technique that not only reduces stress, but also helps the heart is great news.

Transcendental Meditation involves sitting quietly with eyes closed for twenty minutes twice a day. During this time a person concentrates on a special “mantra” or saying to help her to relax. Try it! But don’t become frustrated if you feel uncomfortable at first. Meditation is a skill, and like many skills, it takes practice to do it successfully.



Resources for Surviving

Domestic Violence Resources

Georgia Domestic Violence
Hotline 800-33-HAVEN
Emergency Services (DeKalb)
404-892-4646
Grady Rape Crisis Hotline 404-616-4861
Men Stopping Violence
(for men) 404-270-9894
National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence 800-527-3223
Partnership Against Domestic Violence
—Fulton County 404-873-1766
Turning Point Enterprises Women’s
Resource Center to End
Domestic Violence 404-688-9436

Shelters & Daily Living Needs

Crisis Resource Center Shelter 404-221-0755
Faith for Miracles Shelter 404-758-8213
Salvation Army Shelter 404-688-2884
Task Force for the Homeless 404-589-9495
United Way (call for help) 211

Counseling Resources

Clifton Springs Mental Health
Center 404-243-9500
Grady Central Fulton Mental
Health Center (Florida Hall)
404-616-4762
Grady Psychiatric Emergency
Room 404-616-4762
Kirkwood mental Health
Center 404-370-7474
Suicide Support 800-SUICIDE
National Suicide Prevention
Lifeline 800-273-8255

Nia Support Group Information

Grady 13th Floor, room 13E023
Domestic Violence
group: Tuesdays, 3:00-4:00pm
Suicide group: Mondays, 1:00-2:00pm

Substance Abuse Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous 404-525-3178
Al-Anon 404-687-0466
Narcotics Anonymous 404-708-3219

Grady Physical Health Resources

Emergency Care Center 404-616-6200
Infectious Disease Clinic 404-616-2440
Neighborhood Health Centers 404-377-8873
Purple Pod/Walk-in Clinic 404-616-4150
Women’s Health Services 404-616-4646

Legal Resources

DeKalb County Legal Aid 404-377-0701
Fulton County Family Law Information
Center 404-335-2789
Helpline Georgia (victim
compensation) 404-338-6745
Law Information Center 404-335-2789

Resources for Thriving: Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) at the Georgia Department of Labor provides services to help persons with disabilities (including mental illness) prepare for, start, and maintain employment. VR will work to develop a customized program for each individual. This program may include counseling, guidance, university instruction, vocational/technical training, work readiness training, and or job coaching. For further information about Vocational Rehabilitation, contact the VR Customer Service Center at 404-486-6331.