

Possible Things to Consider When Working With African Americans (IMHO)

1. If you do not have any friends of the same background, culture and race as the person you are working with it's best to assume you are not culturally competent. It's time to catch up on homework and widen your social circle.
2. Religious or spiritual beliefs may be extremely important, however many people have not found traditional religious groups to be knowledgeable about mental health conditions, addictions and the effects of trauma. A person may even be blamed and shamed, for being a "sinner" or having lack of faith.
3. The influence of family or inner circle of friends may be a huge support, but there may also be tremendous stigma, ignorance, and fear. Secrets are kept in the family, until someone is bold enough to take a risk.
4. The darker the skin color and the less European the person looks, the more likely it is that we have dealt with racism and discrimination. As you can imagine a whole lifetime of this can=emotional pain, anger, lack of trust and self-esteem, internalized racism, despair, but also great resilience and strength.
5. Words like recovery, mental health and wellness are usually not favored. They sound "too white", "fancy", or "educated", and not of our culture. People may instead choose to say "feeling bad", or "down", "not right", or "out of it", and may be described as "being out there", or "having issues".