UNDERSTANDING RACIAL TRAUMA

WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?
Racial trauma is the stressful impact or emotional pain that comes from experiencing racism.

WHERE DOES RACIAL TRAUMA COME FROM?
Racial trauma can come directly from interacting with other people or it can be experienced
- Vicariously, when you see others facing racism
- Intergenerationally, when racial trauma from previous generations impacts you

EXAMPLES OF RACIAL TRAUMA
- Experiencing or seeing hate crimes
- Experiencing racial bias (for example, harsher discipline in school based on race)
- Experiencing or witnessing police violence
- Feeling psychological stress due to the experiences of previous generations (for example, slavery, forced removal from tribal lands, seeking asylum from political violence)

Everyone reacts differently: one person might experience intense emotions while another might feel very little emotion or numbness.
Racial trauma impacts our mind and bodies. Some examples are:
- Hyperarousal: physical response where your body is on "high alert" (increased heartbeat, rapid breathing, difficulty sleeping, feeling anxious, irritable, and/or "jumpy")
- Hypervigilance: mind is constantly on guard, scanning your surroundings for danger
- Somatization: experiencing physical (somatic) symptoms like headaches, chest pain, nausea, fatigue
- Numbing: feeling little or no emotion (not feeling fear but also not feeling joy)
STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH RACIAL TRAUMA

Grounding:

- Practice mindfulness grounding techniques. Become aware of your environment and name the feelings in your body. For example you can do the mindfulness exercise 5,4,3,2,1: Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

Connection:

- Connect with your inner sources of strength, wisdom, and love through prayer, meditation, visualization or other practices.

- Connect with others who understand, validate, and affirm you. Find those who can sit with difficult emotions that come with experiencing racial trauma without minimizing or dismissing them.

Rest & Joy:

- Listen to your body and find moments during your day to take a break—even if it is just a couple of seconds to take a few mindful breaths.
- Take a break from social media and other things that drain your energy.
- Take time to cultivate joy in your life by practicing gratitude, seeking connection with others, and doing activities you enjoy.
- Nurture your creative outlets (music, art, dance, sports).

Resistance:

- Engage in critical reflection and participation in social activism. This can be through direct action to make a change or supporting those advocating for change.

For more information, please visit our website at: https://www.thriveresearchlab.com/