

Some recommendations for managing race-related stress on your college campus

- ◇ Reach out for support from friends and family
- ◇ Do not internalize negative racial experiences, instead talk about it with others who may have had similar experiences and support each other.
- ◇ Rely on positive internal and external coping strategies such as spirituality/faith, running, exercising, use of humor, or journaling.
- ◇ Be proactive by participating in social-change activities
- ◇ Seek guidance from supportive mentors/professionals on your college campus
- ◇ Begin the journey of self-exploration through seeking professional help to talk about your experience in a safe, supportive environment.

Visit the **UM Counseling Center** where a counselor can speak with you to provide you with support.

References

Jones, J.M. (1997). *Prejudice and racism* (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.



Courtesy of University of Miami

Counseling Center

(305) 284-5511

www.miami.edu/counseling-center

Managing Race-Related Stress on a College Campus



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What is Race-Related Stress?

Going to college can be a wonderful opportunity to meet and form friendships with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. For some students this may be the very first time that you are living or interacting with a person that is from a different racial/ethnic background than you are from which can sometimes contribute to racial tension and conflict. Which leads to the question, is racism still an issue in this day and age? Some may argue that with the election of the first Black president of the United States, that racism is no longer in existence. Yet, despite this memorable event in U.S history, people of color across the U.S on college campuses are still reporting experiences of being stereotyped, hassled, or being racially profiled. So, yes racism still exists in this day and age. Moreover, it can have a deleterious impact on the individuals and communities who are exposed to it. Race-related stress can be described as the psychological or emotional distress that an individual or group of people experience as a result of being a target of a racial discriminatory act.

Racial discrimination is multidimensional and often occurs on three different levels- individual, institutional, and cultural.

1. **Individual racism** refers to racial discrimination that is experienced on a personal level. Examples of individual racism include being called a racial slur, treated on a basis of a racial stereotype, physically attacked because of one's race, and/or being followed in a department store.
2. **Institutional racism** is often experienced by people of color as a result of institutional and social policies that deny or exclude them from opportunities that are offered to White Americans. This may include being rejected for a loan, denied a job, housing, or access to various educational opportunities on the basis on one's racial group membership.
3. **Cultural racism** is experienced when notable contributions made by racial minority groups are ignored or regarded as inferior compared to that of the "dominant group."

Experiences on College Campuses

Students of color on college campuses often encounter a range of racial incidents that are average and stressful. Some may experience it on a daily basis, while others may have one or two incidents that leave a lasting psychological/emotional impact. For example, an Asian American student may have frequent experiences with peers and professors questioning where the student is from or perhaps commenting on the fact that the student speaks English very well without taking the time to find out that he/she was born and raised in the U.S. Often times Black American and Hispanic male students may report often being approached by campus security to present their student I.D.s to confirm that they are in fact students attending the university.

Other potential events that may occur on a daily basis that may seem small, but over time cumulate to have a stressful or traumatic impact on students of color, include not being invited to participate in social activities with a White roommate or residence hall members; intentionally not being approached to participate in class projects because of the assumption that one is not intelligent, is lazy and will not pull their own weight; or being told that one is an exception because he/she does not act, speak, or write like other members of his/her racial group. Making the assumption that a student is not a member of the campus community and treating an individual on the basis of a stereotype because of their racial/ethnic background can lead the student to feel alienated, criminalized, vulnerable, fearful, angry at one's self and others, hopeless, and invisible.

Potential Consequences

Often times, race-related stress can manifest into adverse psychological, physical, and academic outcomes.

Possible Psychological Reactions

- ◇ Depression
- ◇ Anxiety
- ◇ Frustration
- ◇ Anger or Anger suppression
- ◇ Emotional withdrawal
- ◇ Isolation
- ◇ Hopelessness-helplessness
- ◇ Hypervigilance
- ◇ Post-traumatic stress disorder
- ◇ Internalized racism
- ◇ Alcoholism/ Substance Abuse

Possible Physical Reactions

- ◇ Headaches, body aches
- ◇ Digestive problems
- ◇ Loss of appetite
- ◇ Fatigue
- ◇ Hypertension
- ◇ Cardiovascular disease

Possible Academic Outcomes

- ◇ Decrease in academic motivation
- ◇ Decline in academic grades
- ◇ Withdrawal from school