

MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in"
— Leonard Cohen



The GWOAT...Claressa Shields

Claressa Shields, one of the most accomplished boxers in history, was recently interviewed by Sports Illustrated where she spoke out about past trauma, mental health challenges, and how she continues to overcome obstacles in her way.

Shields was sexually abused when she was 5 years old and was raised by a mother struggling with alcohol abuse. She expressed that the trauma is still very much alive in her today, but while she was younger with the fresher wounds of abuse, she struggled significantly with her anger, expressing herself, and coping. Through all of this, having a mother who was not always mentally alert to her, also left her with abandonment issues. She then grows up to become a celebrity athlete where she is harassed, has things thrown at her, and hears many demeaning comments regularly. Moreover, she is also an African American woman facing discrimination, intergenerational trauma, and additional stigma around getting help for her mental health.

"I feel a certain responsibility to pass on what I've learned, not only as a celebrity, as an athlete, but also as a Black woman. I'm always telling people: Look, it's O.K. to go and get help... it's O.K. that if we're dealing with depression to go and get help, to speak with somebody, and to not let it overwhelm us to where we want to cause harm to ourselves or to others...Once you have that level of clarity, it brings you some peace...But now that I've been able to deal with the things in my life that were causing me mental stress, now boxing is fun for me. I love boxing...And I don't do any of this because I'm an angry Black woman—I am not an angry Black woman. I'm a self-made, accomplished Black woman from Flint, Mich., who dug her way out the dirt to become successful. That's my story."

WHAT'S NEW?

SELF-HARM AWARENESS MONTH

Learn the warning signs and history of self-injurious behaviors, as well as how to help!

ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY

Learn about discrimination around the world and how you can be the change!

SOCIAL CONNECTION & MENTAL HEALTH

Learn how to build social connections and why it is important!

Self-Harm Awareness Month

“Self-harm begins with an express purpose to harm oneself. Self-injury includes skin carving, self-medicating, abnormal scratching, burning oneself, punching or hitting walls to create pain, drinking poisonous chemicals, radical skin picking, pulling hair, and purposely interfering with wound healing. Warning signs include isolating/avoiding social interactions, baggy clothing to hide wounds, finding sharp instruments in strange places, constant excuses for cuts on arms, stomach, and legs, and locking themselves into the bathroom or bedroom for long periods of time.

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SELF-HARM

1. It's not an accident; it is intentional, purposeful behavior
2. It's not about getting attention
 - a. It is a private thing and people often try to hide their behaviors
3. Anyone can do it
 - a. 17% of Americans will do it in their lifetime and dates back to the late 1800's
4. It's more mental than physical
 - a. Self-harming is only a physical manifestation of mental stress (often used to release stress, gain some control, or feel alive)
5. It's not necessarily about suicide
 - a. Even though some people who self-harm feel suicidal, many see self-harm as a way to feel alive

It is important to recognize self-harming behaviors and Self-Harm Awareness Month because it helps to show people that we care, it erases the mental health stigma and stereotypes around self-harm, and it connects people to real help that they need.

Social Connection & Mental Health

Social Emotional Learning goes far beyond mindfulness, yoga, and meditation. It is also about teaching connection, how to express yourself appropriately, conflict resolution skills, using positive reinforcement, and promoting student-led activities in the classroom. One major thing we have been missing the past few years is the social connection with one another.

Social interaction/connection has been shown to reduce stress, lowers the risk of anxiety and depression, lifts self-esteem, and improves mood and empathy! Keep in mind however, that you could have 1,000 friends and still feel lonely. You could also have no close friends or relatives but still feel very connected from within. You can build connections by asking for help, taking care of yourself, as well as giving/sharing/supporting/doing random acts of kindness for others!

Zero Discrimination Day!

March 1st is Zero Discrimination Day! On this day, “UNAIDS calls on countries to examine discriminatory provisions in their laws and policies and make positive changes to ensure equality, inclusion and protection.”



Take the discrimination quiz [HERE](#) to test your knowledge on discrimination around the world. You can also check out a detailed brochure [HERE](#) which “highlights how people can become informed about and promote tolerance, compassion, peace and, above all, a movement for change.” And remember:

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD!